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Working Class Politics in Lancashire, 1885-1906;
A Regional Study in the Origins of the Labour Party.

by
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ABSTRACT

- Chapter 1: examines the economic, social and religious characteristics of the Lancashire industrial region. Heavy industry and extensive urbanisation favoured the development of large scale trades unionism. Industrial specialisation prevented the segregation of social classes except in the conurbations of Manchester and Merseyside.
- Chapter 2: the industrial growth of the cotton unions determined their political outlook and policy. Comparative industrial success produced only an inconsistent programme of political action.
- Chapter 3: the mining unions were weaker than the cotton unions in industrial matters, yet achieved strength through co-operation with the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, a national union, and accepted the parliamentary programme of this union.
- Chapter 4: the new unions formed during the later 1880s exhibited many of the techniques of the older established unions, though affected a more revolutionary political outlook. Yet their links with socialism were often tenuous.
- Chapter 5: examines the issues and events of parliamentary politics, 1885-1906, drawing the conclusion that electoral issues unfavourable to the Liberal party tipped the political balance towards the Conservatives until 1906.
- Chapter 6: the religious influences in politics are examined against the background of denominational rivalry. Toryism appears to have been the product of a xenophobic, nationalist reaction to Irish Catholic immigrants. Social leadership was a further important influence in shaping the political make up of the region.
- Chapter 7: looks at the earliest forms of labour representation in local elections, inspired by trades councils. None of these local movements was particularly successful in establishing a significant labour movement.
- Chapter 8: traces the development of political policies in general among the cotton and mining federations. The United Textile Factory Workers' Association concentrated

on piecemeal factory reform whilst the miners engaged in direct parliamentary campaigning at Wigan and Ince in 1892 and 1895.

- Chapter 9: examines the work of the socialist organisations - the S D F and the I L P - in attempting to bring together working class political action under socialist leadership. The S D F success as a working class group at Burnley is contrasted with its lack of success elsewhere. The I L P, until the 1895 General Election, was also largely unsuccessful in winning support for its parliamentary policy.
- Chapter 10: continues the discussion of the two socialist parties from 1895 to 1905. During this period socialist unity failed in general, despite its being attempted at local level. The relationship with, and the contribution to, the new Labour Representation Committee is examined.
- Chapter 11: the reasons for the increased trade union interest in politics at the turn of the century, with special reference to the cotton and mining unions. The local labour parties that subsequently developed are analysed to assess their political composition and outlook.
- Chapter 12: a survey of the 1906 General Election, especially the Labour campaigns, to show the issues on which Labour candidates depended for votes. A brief, explanatory survey of Labour party development after 1906 is included to place the period 1885 to 1906 in perspective.

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P R E F A C E

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Table 1

Lancashire Occupational Patterns, 1901

	Occupation	Proportion of total work force
I	<u>Primary and Heavy Manufacturing</u>	
	Mining and Quarrying	5.5
	Engineering and Metals	14.8
	Textiles	24.2
	Chemicals	1.2
II	<u>Agriculture</u>	2.8
III	<u>Other Manufacturing</u>	
	Clothing	6.2
	Building	10.1
	Paper and Printing	2.1
IV	<u>Service Trades</u>	
	Professions, Commerce, Servants	15.7
	Transport	2.6
	Food and Drink	7.0
	Miscellaneous	7.8
		<hr/> 100.0 (1,984,046)

Source: Census of England and Wales, 1901 (Cd., 1002)

Table 2

Proportion of Main Industrial Occupations;

Major Lancashire Towns, 1901

	Textiles	Mining	Chemicals (/ inc. glass)	Metal & Engineering (/ inc. ship building)	Building	Transport (/ inc. docks)	Food and drink	Profes- sions, commerce	General Trades, Miscell.
Barrow	3	1	0	40 /	7	9 /	5	7	29
Birkenhead	0	0	0	15 /	7	18 /	7	13	40
Blackburn	55	0	0	6	5	2	5	4	23
Bolton	38	3	0	12	5	3	6	5	27
Bootle	0	0	0	8	6	20 /	8	10	48
Burnley	55	6	0	4	4	1	5	3	22
Bury	38	0	0	6	5	0	5	3	43
Liverpool	0	0	0	7	7	16 /	11	13	46
Manchester	8	0	1	9	7	5	9	7	53
Oldham	42	1	0	18	5	9	4	5	17
Preston	45	0	0	6	7	4	8	5	25
Rochdale	45	0	0	10	6	3	6	5	25
St Helens	0	20	26 /	6	7	3	6	4	28
Salford	14	1	0	8	7	5	4	7	54
Stockport	28	0	0	4	11	6	7	6	36
Warrington	8	0	2	22	10	6	9	6	37
Wigan	15	24	0	8	5	4	6	4	34

Source: Census of England and Wales, 1901 (Cd. 1002)

Table 3

Dependence on Industrial Trades, Manufacturing Districts
(other than major towns), Lancashire 1901

Proportion of
working population
employed in:-

	Textiles	Mining	Metals and Engineering
75%+	Walton-le-Dale, Brierfield.		
60-75%	Colne, Crompton, Gt Harwood, Haslingden, Mossley, Nelson, Padiham, Rishton, Royton.	Haydock.	
50-60%	Bacup, Chadderton, Clitheroe, Darwen, Heywood, Little- borough, Milnrow, Oswald- twistle, Ramsbottom, Whitworth.	Ashton-in-Makerfield, Skelmersdale, Standish	
40-50%	Chorley, Church, Clayton-le- Moors, Farnworth, Middleton, Rawtenstall, Stalybridge, Tottington.	Golborne, Hindley, Pemberton, Tyldesley, Westhoughton.	Horwich.
25-40%	Accrington, Ashton-under- Lyne, Droylsden, Failsworth, Hyde, Leigh, Kearsley, Leyland, Little Hulton, Little Lever, Radcliffe, Reddish, Turton.	Atherton, Ince, Leigh, Gorton. Little Hulton, Little Lever, Swinton and Pendlebury, Orrell.	
10-25%	Denton, Gorton, Whitefield, Worsley,	Farnworth, Kearsley, Prescot, Worsley.	Accrington, Hyde, Newton le Willows.

Source: Census of England and Wales, 1901 (Cd. 1002)

Table 4

Proportion of Population engaged in Industrial Trades,

Agriculture, Professional or Domestic Service: 101 Lancashire Towns, 1901

Less than 40%	40-45%	45-50%	50-55%	55-60%	more than 60%
Haydock	Abram	Atherton	Accrington	Bacup	Stret-
Latham &	Ashton in	Barrow	Ashton u	Barnolds-	ford
Burscough	Makerfield	Droylsden	Lyne	wick	
Litherland	Aspull	Eccles	Bolton	Blackburn	
Prestwich	Birkdale	Failsworth	Brierfield	Bury	
St Helens	Birkenhead	Gt Crosby	Burnley	Church	
Widnes	Eccles	Heaton Norris	Chadderton	Darwen	
(6)	Fulwood	Kearsley	Chorley	Gt Harwood	
	Garston	Leigh	Clayton le	Heywood	
	Golborne	Levenshulme	Moors	Littleborough	
	Gorton	Gt Hulton	Clitheroe	Milnrow	
	Hindley	Manchester	Colne	Padiham	
	Horwich	Middleton	Crompton	Ramsbottom	
	Ince	Moss Side	Denton	Rishton	
	Liverpool	Reddish	Farnworth	Whitefield	
	Newton le	Salford	Haslingden	Whitworth	
	Willows	Stockport	Hyde	(15)	
	Ormskirk	Swinton &	Leyland		
	Orrell	Pendlebury	Lt Lever		
	Pemberton	Tyldesley	Mossley		
	Prescot	Westhoughton	Nelson		
	Skelmersdale	Wigan	Oldham		
	Southport	Withington	Oswaldtwistle		
	Standish	Worsley	Preston		
	Walton le	(23)	Radcliffe		
	Dale		Rawtenstall		
	Warrington		Rochdale		
	Waterloo		Royton		
	(25)		Saddleworth		
			Stalybridge		
			Todmorden		
			Tottington		
			Turton		
			(31)		

Table 5

Trade Union Membership in the Cotton Industry

Spinners, Cardroom Workers and Weavers, 1885-1914

Year	Spinners	Cardroom	Weavers
1885	16597 (A)	---	---
1886	15901	9370	---
1887	15416	---	35480 (B)
1888	15910	14655	---
1889	17106	14543	---
1890	17729	15598	46102
1891	19661	28160	49414
1892	19575	30796	---
1893	19175	24468	---
1894	18615	22161	75510
1895	18234	20970	83195 (C)
1896	18009	21210	81700 (C)
1897	17760	20485	80800 (D)
1898	17813	19903	74420 (D)
1899	18751	20536	81500 (E)
1900	18384	22197	81500
1901	18474	22606	81175
1902	18391	22940	82267
1903	18315	---	82597
1904	18534	22994	80420 (E)
1905	19451	27755	89260
1906	20928	31328	88175
1907	22506	40834	101842
1908	22837	44976	115314
1909	23124	46590	118626
1910	22992	44730	114434
1911	23248	46338	112462
1912	23500	51914	137196
1913	23787	57257	179391
1914	23645	58402	197957

Source: Annual Reports of the three unions of Spinners, Cardroom Workers and Weavers, except:-

A Statistical Tables and Reports on Trades Unions, 2nd Report, 1888, (C-5505)

B ibid, 3rd Report 1889 (C-5808)

C Annual Report of Labour Department of Board of Trade, 1896-97 (C-8642)

D ibid, 1898 (C-9443)

E ibid, 1906-07 (Cd. - 4413)

Table 6

Growth of the Weavers' Amalgamation Membership and
Affiliation of Local Societies, 1890-1906/9

1890

9000 +	Blackburn
6000 +	Burnley
3000 +	Accrington
2000 +	Chorley, Hyde, Padiham, Preston
1000 +	Bury, Clitheroe, Gt Harwood, Haslingden, Nelson, Oldham
250-1000	Bamber Bridge, Barnoldswick, Colne, Heywood, Ramsbottom, Rishton, Todmorden, Longridge.

1900

10000 +	Blackburn
8000 +	Burnley
4000 +	Darwen, Nelson, Preston
2000 +	Accrington, Blackburn Protection Society, Bolton, Bury, Colne, Gt Harwood, Hyde, Oldham, Padiham, Rochdale.
1000 +	Church, Clitheroe, Haslingden, Heywood, Rishton, Rossendale, Todmorden.
250-1000	Bamber Bridge, Barnoldswick, Bacup, Clayton-le-Moors, Glossop, Longridge, Macclesfield, Saddleworth, Ramsbottom, Whitworth, Wigan.

1906/9

11000 +	Burnley
10000 +	Blackburn
5000 +	Darwen, Nelson
3000 +	Blackburn Protection Society, Colne, Hyde, Preston.
2000 +	Accrington, Bury, Bolton, Chorley, Clitheroe, Gt Harwood, Oldham, Padiham, Rochdale.
1000 +	Bacup, Church, Haslingden, Heywood, Ramsbottom, Rishton, Rossendale, Todmorden.
250-1000	Bamber Bridge, Barnoldswick, Clayton-le-Moors, Congleton, Glossop, Longridge, Macclesfield, Manchester and Salford, Saddleworth, Skipton, Stockport, Whitworth, Wigan.

Source: Weavers' Amalgamation, Annual Reports, 1884-1914.

Table 7

Wages in the Cotton Industry: 1886, 1906
(Shillings per week)

I Cardroom Operatives

	1886		1906	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Manchester	21-26	12-15	25-40	14-20
Oldham	17-22	14	22-30	22.6
Bolton	18-20		20-29	
Ashton-u-Lyne	15-21		20-30	
Stockport	14-19		19-29	

II Weavers (average of male and female)

Preston	17.6	19.5
Blackburn	18.5	22.1
Burnley	20	24.9
Bacup, Bury, Rochdale	15-17	19-20
Ashton-u-Lyne	16-6	17.4

III Spinners

Manchester	35	40
Oldham	33	41.9
Bolton	35	46
Ashton	31.1	41.9

IV Piecers (average for Bolton, Oldham, Preston and Blackburn)

Big Piecers	14.2	17.9
Middle)	9.3	12
Little)		

Computed from G H Wood, The History of Wages in the Cotton Trade During the Past 100 Years (1910). The above table attempts to give the average wage, but in fact there was great variation in wages paid. (Cardroom workers were paid on an hourly basis, the others by piece).

Table 8

Output, Comparative Output and Employment in the
Lancashire and Cheshire Coalfield, 1881-1920

I Lancashire and Cheshire: Employment and Output

Year	Output (Tons)	Persons Employed	Output per Person (Tons)	
			Lancashire	Cheshire
1881	19,281,810	63689	302	305
1885	21,274,827	66302	322	282
1890	22,801,178	76479	298	298
1895 /	22,764,171	99491	256	289
1900	25,541,659	87976	263	264
1905	24,247,514	93896	257	293

/ (includes North Wales)

II National Output and Employment

Year	Output (Tons)	Total Employed
1885	159,351,418	500,369
1900	225,170,163	772,759
1905	236,111,150	850,350
1920	229,503,435	1,249,224

(Source I, II: Finlay, A. Gibson, A Compilation of Statistics of the Coalmining Industry of the United Kingdom. (1922))

III Lancashire and Cheshire: Comparative Output (Tons)

Coalfield	1875	1880	1890	1900	1910
Northumberland	6.7	6.8	9	11.5	13
Durham	25.5	28	30	34.8	39
Lancs, Chesh, N Wales	21	22	25.7	28.6	27
Staffs, Salop, Worcs, Warwicks.	16.5	15.7	17	18.7	20
Yorkshire	15.8	17	22	28	38
Notts, Derbys, Leics	11.6	13	18.7	26	31
South Wales	14.1	21	29	39	48
Scotland	18.5	18	24	33	41

(Source: R Page-Arnot, The Miners (1948), 55-8)

Table 9

Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation: Membership,
1886-1906

Membership			
Year	Full	Half	Total
1886	8657	32	8689
1887	7237	18	7255
1888	9694	16	9710
1889			17295 (1)
1890	28777	95	28872 (2)
1891	(No figures available)		
1892			47132 (3)
1893	36249	477	36726
1894	37052	207	37259
1895	29294	348	29642
1896	26869	288	27157
1897			25721 (4)
1898	24954	427	25381
1899	27889	512	28401
1900	28690	357	29247
1901	34969	802	35771
1902	36887	910	37797
1903	35331	949	36280
1904	33971	922	34893
1905	30842	833	31675
1906	31592	790	33382

Source: L C M F Annual Proceedings, except:-

1. Board of Trade, 3rd Report on Trade Unions, 1889 (C-5808)
2. Webb T U Coll. A, XXVII (i), 2.
3. Board of Trade, 9th Report on Trade Unions, 1895, (C-8644)
(This figure is undoubtedly inflated, probably containing a large amount of non-unionists).
4. Board of Trade, 10th Report on Trade Unions, 1896, (C-9013)

Table 10

Membership of Principal New Unions in Lancashire
1892-1907

Society	1892	1895	1900	1906/07
Dock Labourers (1889)	8463	10871	14493	15569
Labour Amalgamation (1892)	3000	400	1608	1495
Tramway Employees (1891)	2000	4000	7536	
Carters & Lurrymen (Bolton 1891)	4000			2500
Quay and Railway Porters (1889)	3038	2982	3400	
Carters & Lurrymen (Manchester 1891)	900	(merged with Tramway employees 1894)		
Machine & General Labourers (1890)	1800	1200	2000	834
Women Workers Federation (1889)	200	61	120	
Jewish Tailors (1896)			1000	(dissolved 1907)
Shirt & Jacket Cutters (c.1891)		230	220	
Paper Mill Workers (1890)	1657	1469	864	
Chemical & Copper Workers (1889-90)	166	106	(dissolved 1896)	

Source: Board of Trade, Labour Department, Report on Trades Unions in 1899 (cd - 422) and in 1905-07 (cd - 4651). Labour Party, Annual Conference Report, 1905.

Table 11

School attendance in Lancashire, 1900

	Voluntary Schools	Attendance	Board Schools	Attendance
Barrow	6	2701	11	8922
Birkenhead	23	12986	3	2305
Blackburn	44	18636	3	761
Bolton	42	14827	13	9901
Bootle	5	4112	4	3764
Burnley	21	7386	9	5993
Bury	28	7970	0	0
Liverpool	112	64111	35	35658
Manchester	96	42847	54	35058
Oldham	29	9439	17	10347
Preston	37	18044	0	0
Rochdale	14	4511	13	5000
St Helens	34	14791	0	0
Salford	43	20023	17	12313
Stockport	24	10622	0	0
Wigan	17	9644	0	0

Source: Elementary Education Returns, cd. - 315, 1900.

Table 12

Irish born people living in England

	Irish born population	% of total population
1841	289,404	1.8
1851	519,959	2.9
1861	601,634	3.0
1871	560,540	2.5
1881	562,374	2.2
1891	458,315	1.6
1901	426,565	1.3
1911	375,325	1.0

(Source: J A Jackson, The Irish in Britain, 1963, 11)

Table 13

Constituency Sizes in Lancashire, 1885-1906

	1885	1886	1892	1895	1900	1906
1500-7500	5	6	5	5	3	3
7500-12500	41	40	37	34	33	23
12500-17500	7	7	9	12	13	20
17500 +	1	1	3	3	5	8

Voting in Lancashire: General Elections 1885-1906

Election of:	1885			1886			1892		
CONSERVATIVE	Boroughs	Counties	Total	Boroughs	Counties	Total	Boroughs	Counties	Total
Candidates	37	21	58	37	20	57	38	21	59
Votes	186900	97794	284694	144772	71181	215953	188216	102086	290302
% share of votes	54.2	50.6	52.9	54.5	52.2	52.4	52.8	50.7	52.05
MP's	29	9	38	32	16	48	27	10	37
LIBERAL									
Candidates	41	21	62	33	17	50	36	20	56
Votes	158044	95628	253672	130755	65154	195909	168024	99391	267415
%	45.8	49.4	47.1	47.5	47.8	47.6	47.2	49.3	47.9
MP's	9	12	21	6	5	11	11	11	22
TOTAL									
Candidates	78	42	120	70	37	107	74	41	115
Votes	344944	193422	538366	275527	136335	411862	356240	201477	557717
Electorate	322176	231321	553417	321218	218563	539778	347961	244775	592736

(In this table the Liberal party vote, 1885-1906, includes 1 Irish Nationalist. The Labour vote for 1895 is that of I L P candidates, for that of 1906 it is official L R C candidates only. In 1900 independent socialist candidates gained altogether 5,674 votes (1.3% of the total poll). In 1906 independent labour, socialist and conservative candidates gained 25,045 votes, (3.6% of the total poll). The votes of these candidates have not been included in the table).

Table 14 - continued

Election of: CONSERVATIVE	1895			1900			1906		
	Boroughs	Counties	Total	Boroughs	Counties	Total	Boroughs	Counties	Total
Candidates	38	19	57	38	19	57	36	19	55
Votes	185161	80048	265209	153358	83483	236841	175034	108522	283556
%	56.1	53.4	55.3	57.4	52.8	55.7	41.6	39.5	40.8
MP's	34	16	50	34	15	49	7	5	12
LIBERAL									
Candidates	30	16	46	27	15	42	28	15	43
Votes	132239	54001	197240	113786	69019	182805	168807	104399	273206
%	40.1	43.4	41.1	42.6	43.6	43.0	40.2	38.1	39.3
MP's	4	5	9	4	6	10	23	11	34
LABOUR									
Candidates	6	2	8	-	-	-	10	6	16
Votes	12412	4709	17121	-	-	-	65256	48328	113584
%	3.8	3.1	3.6	-	-	-	15.4	17.6	16.3
MP's	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	5	13
TOTAL									
Candidates	74	37	111	65	34	99	74	40	114
Votes	329812	138758	468570	267144	152502	419646	409097	261249	670346
Electorate	351841	259677	611518	370200	285566	655766	390886	322111	712997

Table 15

Liberal Vote, 1885-1906 in:-

Cotton districts		Mining districts	
Proportion of cotton workers in constituency:	Average Liberal vote	Proportion of miner voters	Average Liberal vote
Over 30%	51.8	Over 40%	47.6
20-30%	47.3	10-25%	46.3
10-20%	52.1	0-10%	48.7

Table 16

Liberal Vote, 1885-1906 in Religious Categories

Proportion of Catholics in Constituency	Average Liberal vote
Over 20%	40.6
10-20%	45.8
0-10%	50.1

Table 17

Liberal vote in Lancashire 1885-1906

Gains and Losses

Constituency	1885		1892		1895		1900		1906
	% gain		% gain		% gain		% gain		
Ashton u Lyne	49.6	-0.6	49.0	-5.2	43.8	-3.4	40.4	+15.9	56.3
Barrow	53.1	-6.5	46.6	-4.1	42.5	no change	(42.5)	+17.8	60.3
Birkenhead	44.3	+2.9	47.2	+2.0	49.2	(-7.7)	(41.5)	+15.8	57.3
Blackburn	40.7	+2.6	43.3	-16.5	26.8	-1.2	25.6	+23.5	49.1
Bolton	47.6	+0.1	47.7	-7.2	40.5	+0.4	40.9	+27.9	68.8
Burnley	53.7	+2.5	56.2	-4.7	51.5	-4.2	47.7	+3.9	51.6
Bury	51.2	-6.9	44.3	+0.9	45.2	-0.9	44.3	+12.6	56.9
Liverpool									
Abercrombie	44.0	-2.5	41.5	(-6.4)	(35.1)	(-7.7)	(27.4)	+24.3	51.7
•Everton	31.3	+4.1	35.4	(-6.4)	(29.0)	(-7.7)	(21.3)	+20.9	42.2
Exchange	49.8	+0.8	50.6	-3.9	46.7	-11.6	35.1	+16.3	51.4
Kirkdale	37.5	+5.0	42.5	-3.6	38.9	-10.3	28.6	+17.1	45.7
Scotland	64.8	-1.1	63.9	-4.8	59.1	-1.2	57.9	+9.2	68.1
E Toxteth	42.0	-4.8	37.2	(-6.4)	(30.8)	(-7.7)	23.1	(+18.0)	(41.1)
W Toxteth	32.1	+8.6	40.7	-6.4	34.3	-7.7	26.6	+16.8	43.3
Walton	41.7	-1.5	40.2	(-6.4)	33.8	(-7.7)	26.1	+20.7	46.8
West Derby	42.1	-0.3	41.8	-15.2	26.7	(-7.7)	19.0	+20.8	39.8
Manchester									
E	45.0	+3.0	48.0	-1.9	46.1	-9.5	36.6	+22.5	59.1
N	43.2	+9.6	51.8	+1.0	52.8	-2.7	50.1	+13.6	63.7
NE	40.0	+9.3	49.3	-0.9	48.4	-2.9	45.5	+19.1	64.6
NW	46.7	+0.7	47.4	-6.0	41.4	-6.2	35.2	+20.9	56.1
S	54.8	-3.7	51.1	-1.5	49.6	-6.7	42.9	+24.1	67.0
SW	46.1	+4.9	51.0	-4.3	46.7	-9.3	37.4	+21.4	58.8
Oldham	50.6	+0.4	51.0	-2.2	48.8	+1.8	50.6	+9.0	59.6
Preston	25.0	+3.1	28.1	-1.3	(26.8)	-4.6	22.2	+34.7	56.9
Rochdale	53.8	+1.1	54.9	-7.2	47.7	+2.2	49.9	+7.2	57.1
<hr/>									
Regional %	47.1		47.9		42.6		43.6		57.7
Swing		+0.2		-5.3		+1.3		+14.1	

Table 17 (cont)

Constituency	1885	% gain	1892	% gain	1895	% gain	1900	% gain	1906
St Helens	49.6	no change	49.6	-3.1	46.5	-5.4	44.5	<u>+16.5</u>	55.6
Salford N	48.7	+3.3	52.0	-2.1	49.9	-5.4	44.5	+12.4	56.9
S	50.3	-0.6	49.7	-0.3	49.9	-7.9	41.5	+14.1	55.6
W	51.9	-2.2	49.7	-0.3	49.4	-5.3	44.1	+14.8	58.9
Stalybridge	48.2	-1.0	47.2	-2.3	44.9	+4.5	49.4	+3.7	53.1
Stockport	47.9	+3.1	51.0	-3.5	47.5	+4.2	51.7	<u>+9.8</u>	61.5
Warrington	44.7	+1.2	45.9	-0.5	45.4	(-2.9)	(42.5)	+15.2	57.7
Wigan	42.8	+6.2	49.0	-5.2	43.8	(+1.6)	(45.4)	-9.9	35.3
Accrington	52.3	+0.4	52.7	-1.3	51.4	+0.2	51.6	+8.2	59.8
Bootle	36.9	+3.7	40.6	(-6.4)	(34.2)	(-7.7)	(26.5)	+22.4	48.9
Chorley	33.1	(-1.9)	(31.2)	(-3.0)	(28.2)	(+1.3)	(29.5)	+15.0	44.5
Clitheroe	60.4	-2.2	58.2	(-1.3)	(56.9)	(+0.2)	(57.1)	<u>+18.8</u>	75.9
Darwen	49.8	+0.9	50.7	-3.9	46.8	+1.5	48.3	+1.6	49.9
Eccles	48.6	+2.7	51.3	-3.2	48.1	+1.0	49.1	<u>+3.6</u>	52.7
Gorton	60.5	-9.4	51.1	-9.0	42.1	+5.2	47.3	<u>+19.1</u>	66.4
Heywood	53.4	+0.4	53.8	-7.1	46.7	+2.1	48.8	+7.0	55.8
Hyde	53.3	-5.0	48.3	-3.5	44.8	+1.9	46.7	+8.6	55.3
Ince	46.6	+4.7	51.3	-3.5	47.8	(-2.6)	(45.2)	<u>+25.1</u>	70.3
Leigh	58.5	-3.4	55.1	-1.6	53.5	-2.9	50.6	+7.5	58.1
Middleton	54.6	-4.1	50.5	-4.4	46.1	+2.9	49.0	+7.6	56.6
Newton	47.7	-2.9	44.8	-3.0	41.8	(-2.6)	(39.2)	<u>+13.6</u>	52.8
Ormskirk	31.2	+0.1	31.3	(-3.0)	(28.3)	(-7.7)	(20.6)	+17.9	38.5
Prestwich	53.6	-3.4	49.3	+1.1	50.4	+2.4	52.8	+10.0	62.8
Radcliffe-cum Farnworth	52.5	-2.0	50.5	-3.4	47.1	+3.2	50.3	+6.5	56.8
Rossendale	58.9	-0.6	58.3	(-1.3)	(47.0)	(+0.2)	(57.2)	+2.9	60.1
Southport	51.1	-4.4	46.7	-0.7	46.0	(+3.0)	(49.0)	+1.0	50.9
Stretford	51.0	-6.7	44.3	(-1.5)	(42.8)	-3.4	39.4	+17.9	57.3
Westhoughton	38.4	+3.6	41.0	(-2.5)	(39.5)	(-1.3)	38.2	<u>+22.0</u>	60.2
Widnes	37.9	+10.7	48.6	-2.1	46.5	-16.1	30.4	+15.0	45.4
Regional Swing	47.1	+0.2	47.9	-5.3	42.6	+1.3	43.6	+14.1	57.7

NOTE: Figures in brackets are estimated percentages, derived from swings in neighbouring constituencies, for uncontested elections. The underlined figures for 1906 denote the presence of a labour candidate supported by the L R C.

Table 18

Social and Economic Background of Lancashire MP's

Interest	Conservative MP's	Liberal MP's
Landowner	14	4
Employer of labour	24	19
Business and Commerce	13	10
Law	14	18
Professional Politician		
A Ministerialist	7	2
B Radical	0	6
Gentleman of Leisure	5	0
Writer and Journalist	3	3
Newspaper Proprietor	0	3
Trade Unionist	0	1
Totals	80	66

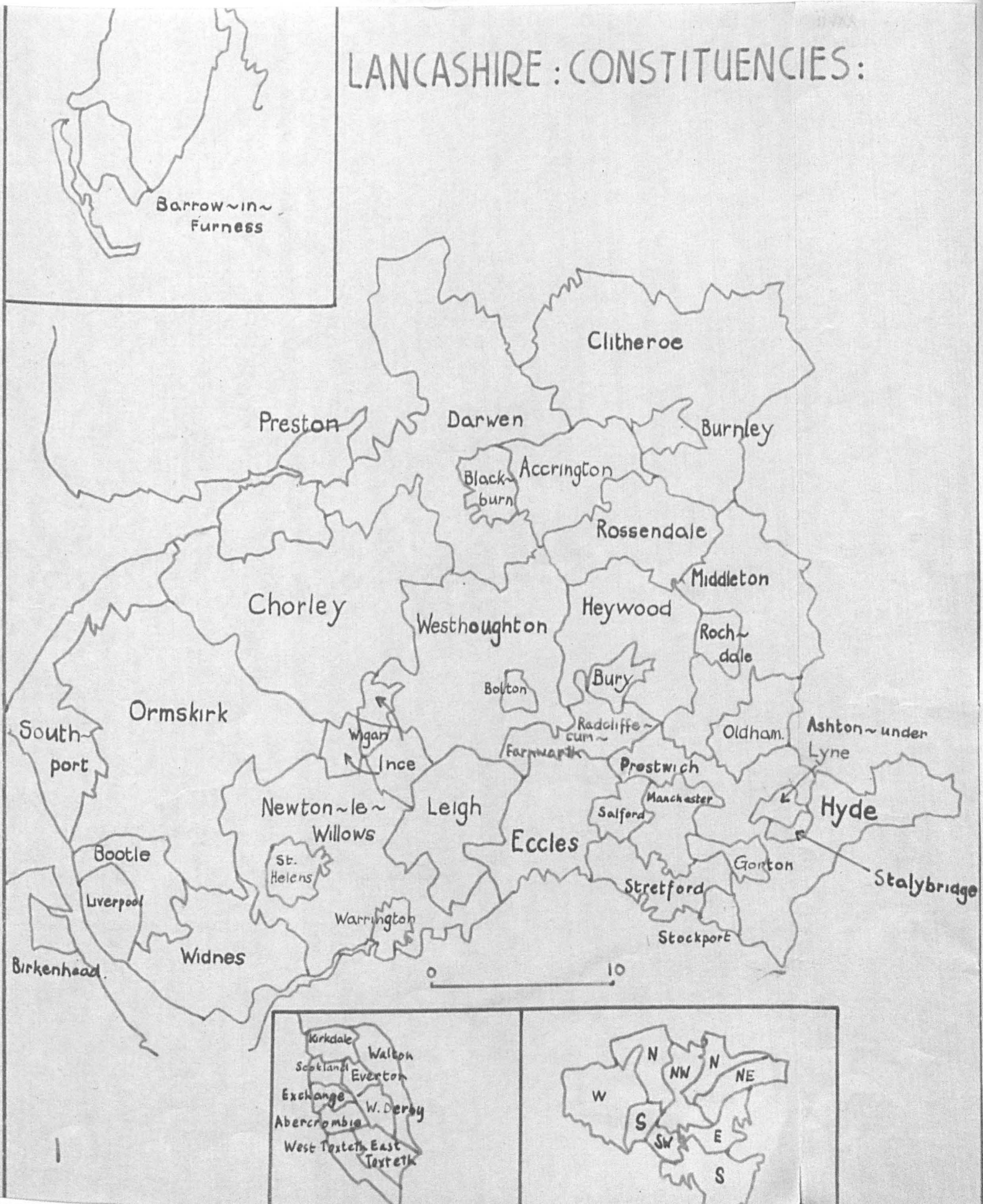
(Compiled from Who Was Who, Dod's Parliamentary Companion and The Liberal Yearbook).

LIST OF MAPS

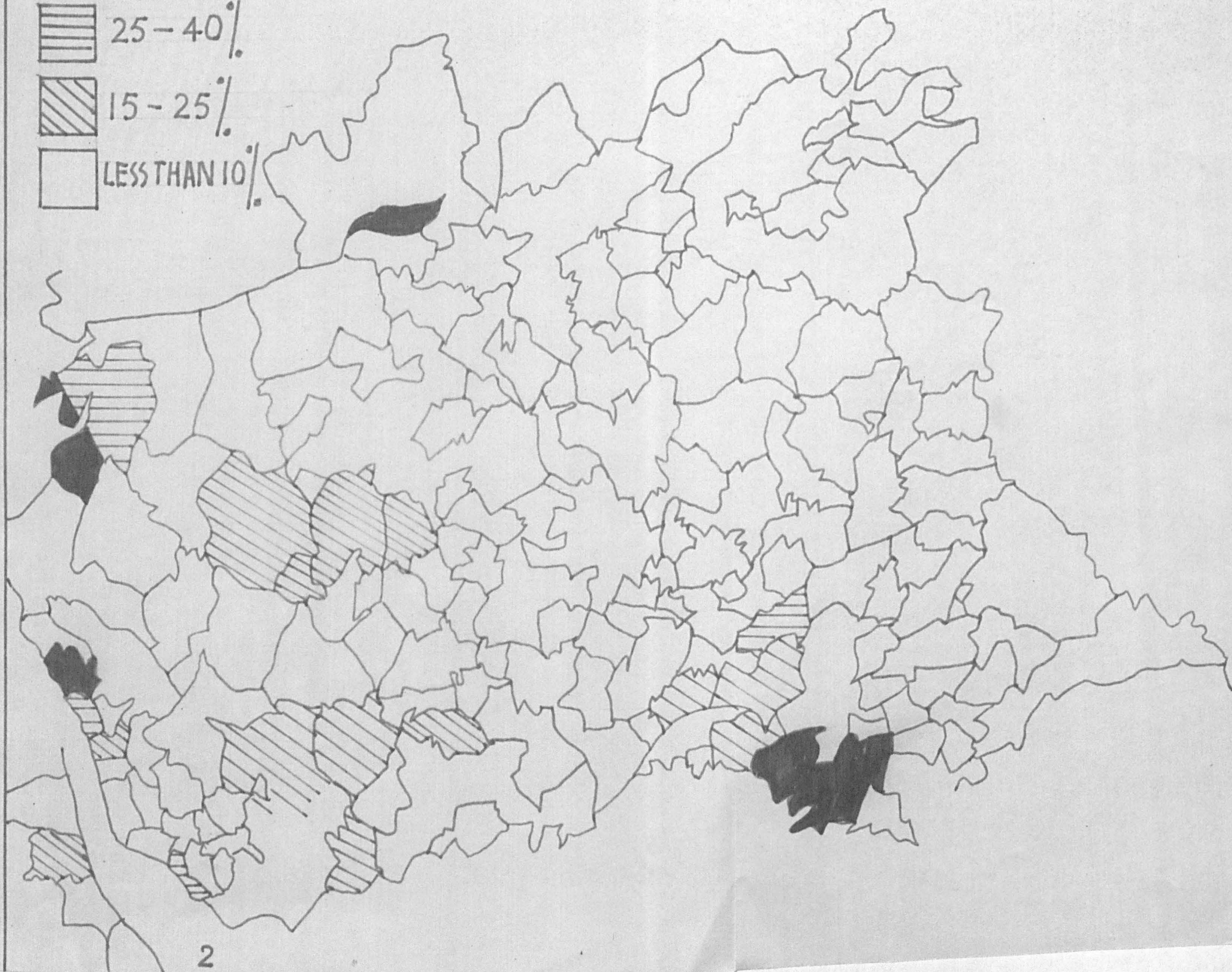
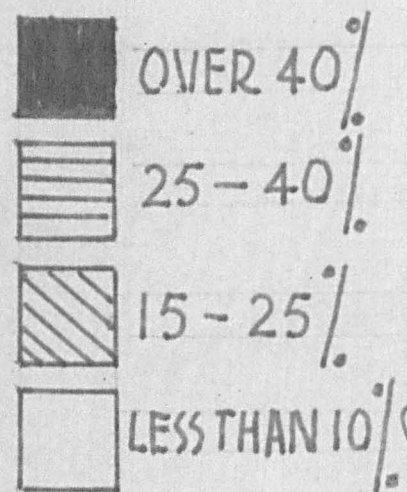
1. Lancashire: Constituencies
2. Household Domestics, 1901
3. Trade Unionism
4. Religious Attendance, 1851
5. Religious Attendance, 1881
6. Church Support, 1851
7. Church Support, 1881
8. Catholic Population, 1900-05
9. Social Character of Lancashire Constituencies
10. Distribution of Party Support, 1885
11. Voting in Lancashire, 1885 to 1906
12. Labour Seats 1918 to 1935

The outlines in maps 1, 3, 8-12 are constituency boundaries; in Maps 4-7 registration districts; and in Map 2 local government administration districts.

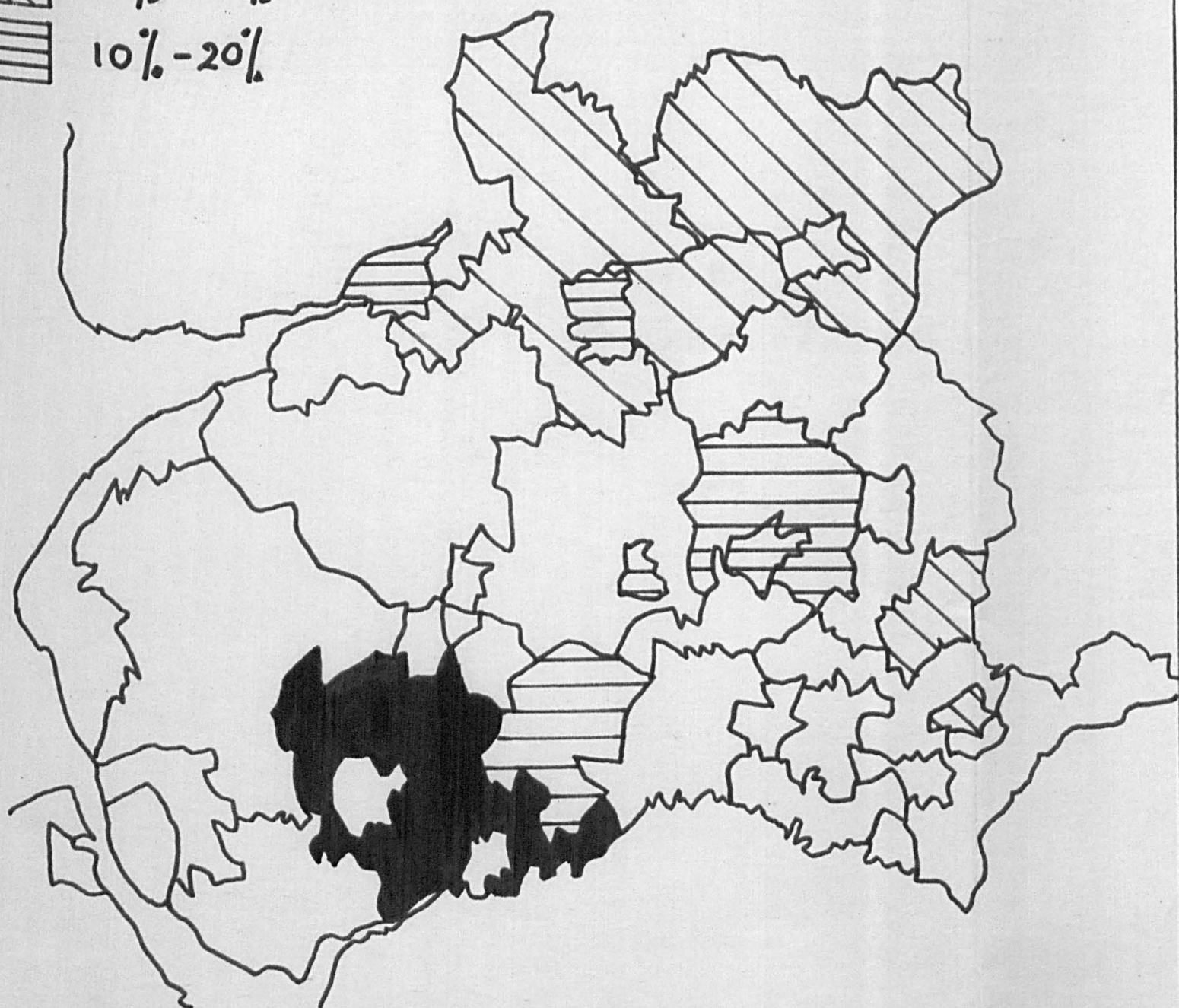
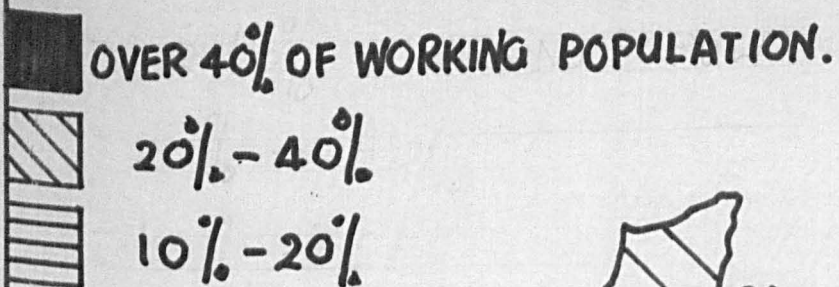
LANCASHIRE : CONSTITUENCIES:



PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLD DOMESTICS · 1901 CENSUS ·

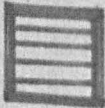


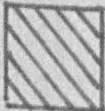
TRADE UNION MEMBERS: COTTON & MINING DISTRICTS c. 1895 - 1900

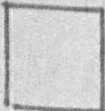


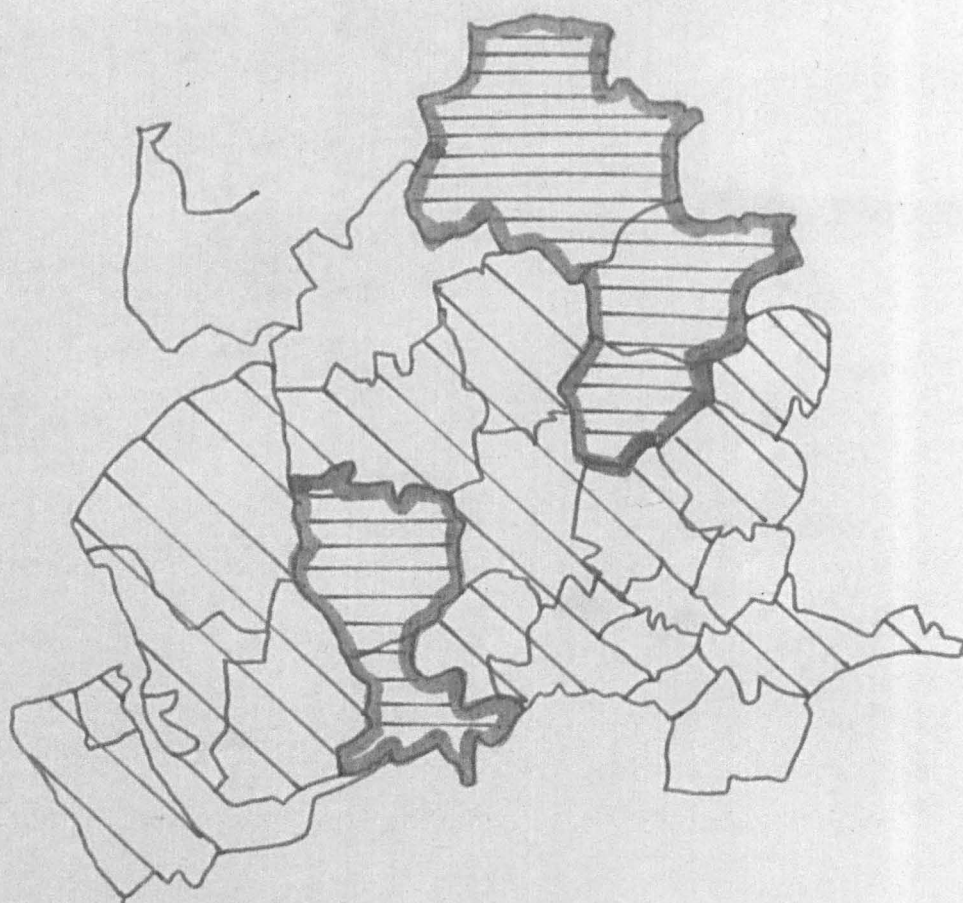
ATTENDANCE AT WORSHIP. 1851.

• RELIGIOUS CENSUS.

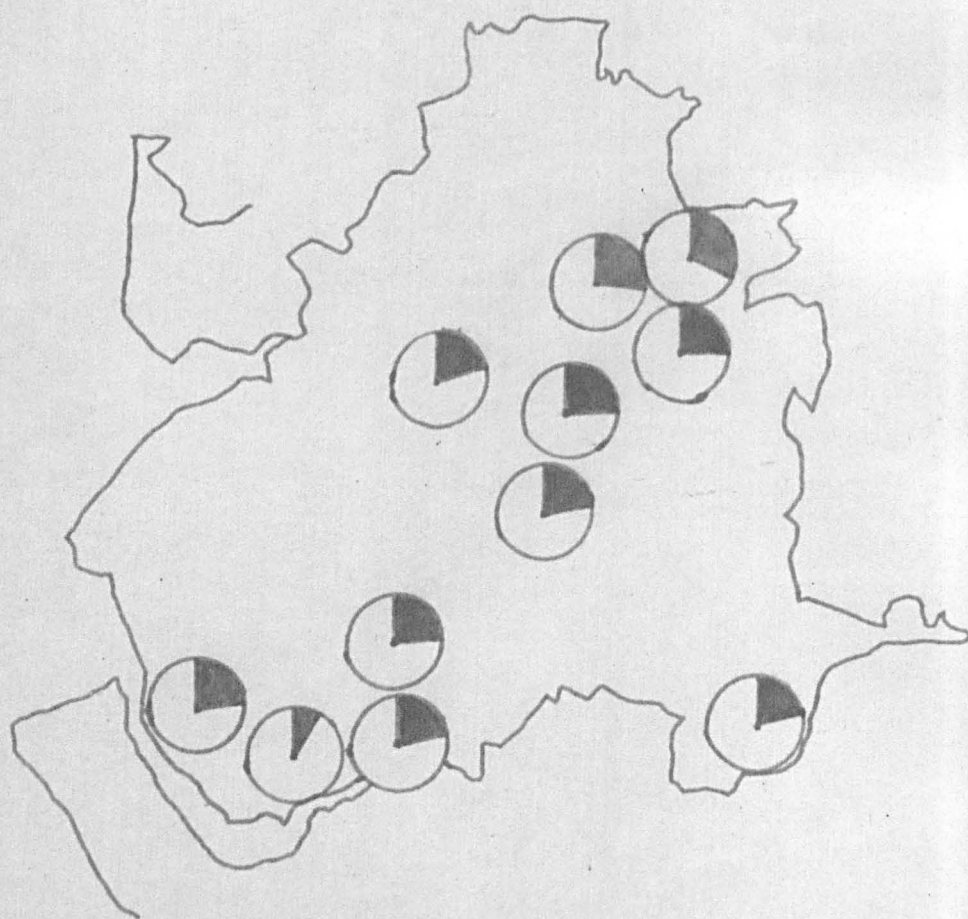
 OVER 40% OF TOTAL POPULATION...

 30 TO 40%

 LESS THAN 30%



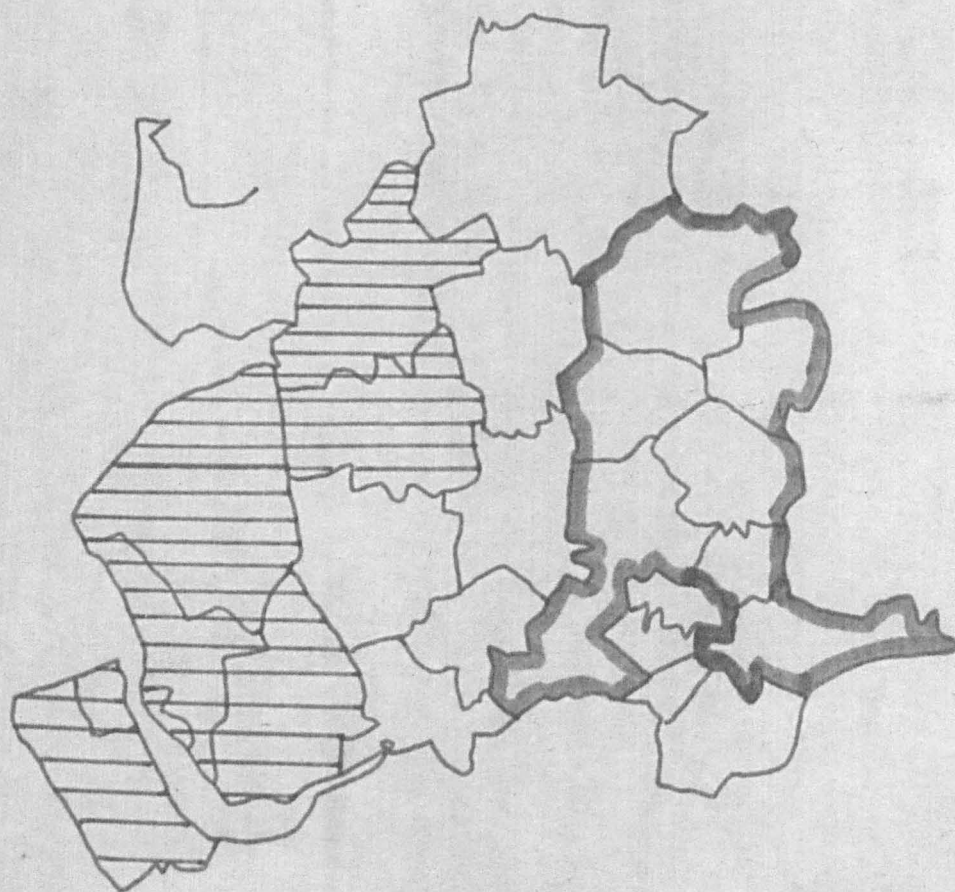
ATTENDANCE AT WORSHIP 1881...
PROPORTION OF RESIDENT POPULATION...
[NONCONFORMIST & INDEPENDENT...]



COMPARATIVE CHURCH SUPPORT 1851 • RELIGIOUS CENSUS.

▨ OVER 70% ANGLICAN & CATHOLIC...

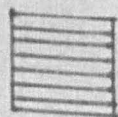
□ OVER 50% NONCONFORMIST...



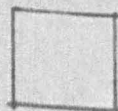
COMPARATIVE CHURCH SUPPORT • 1881.
[NONCONFORMIST & INDEPENDENT...]



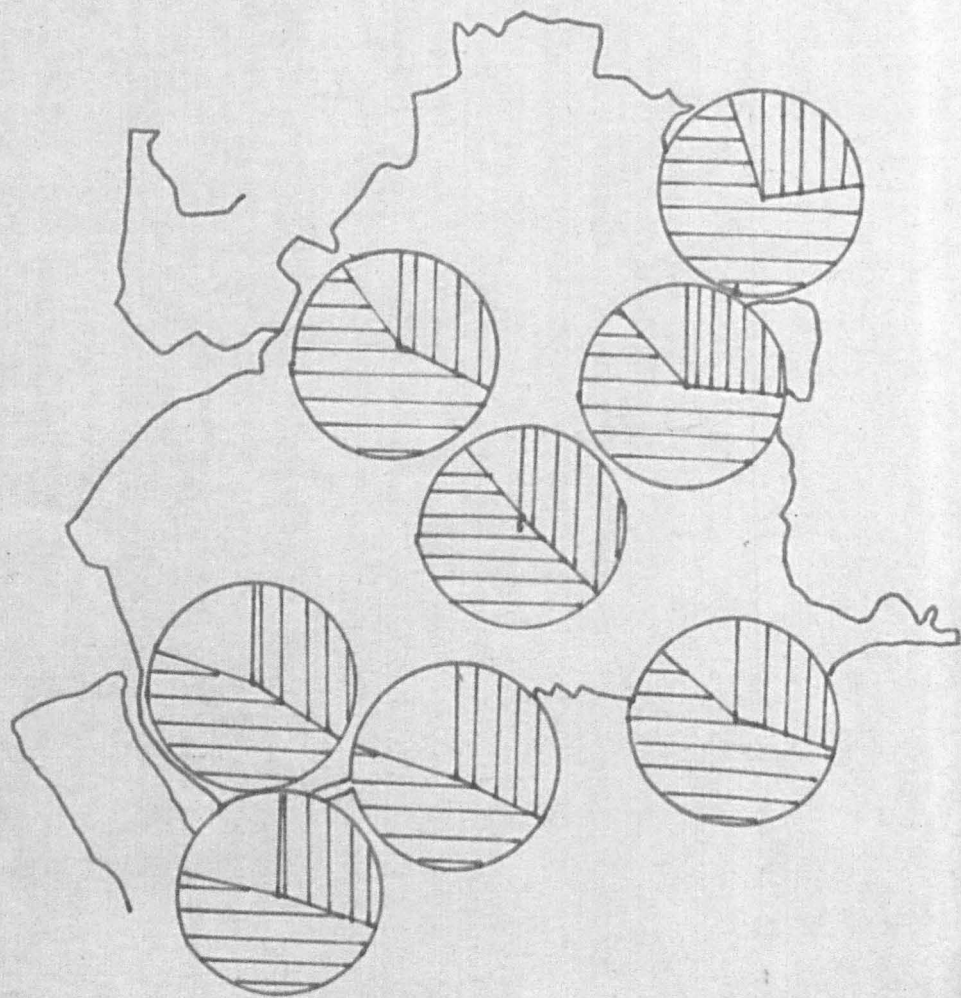
ANGLICAN...



NONCONFORMIST...

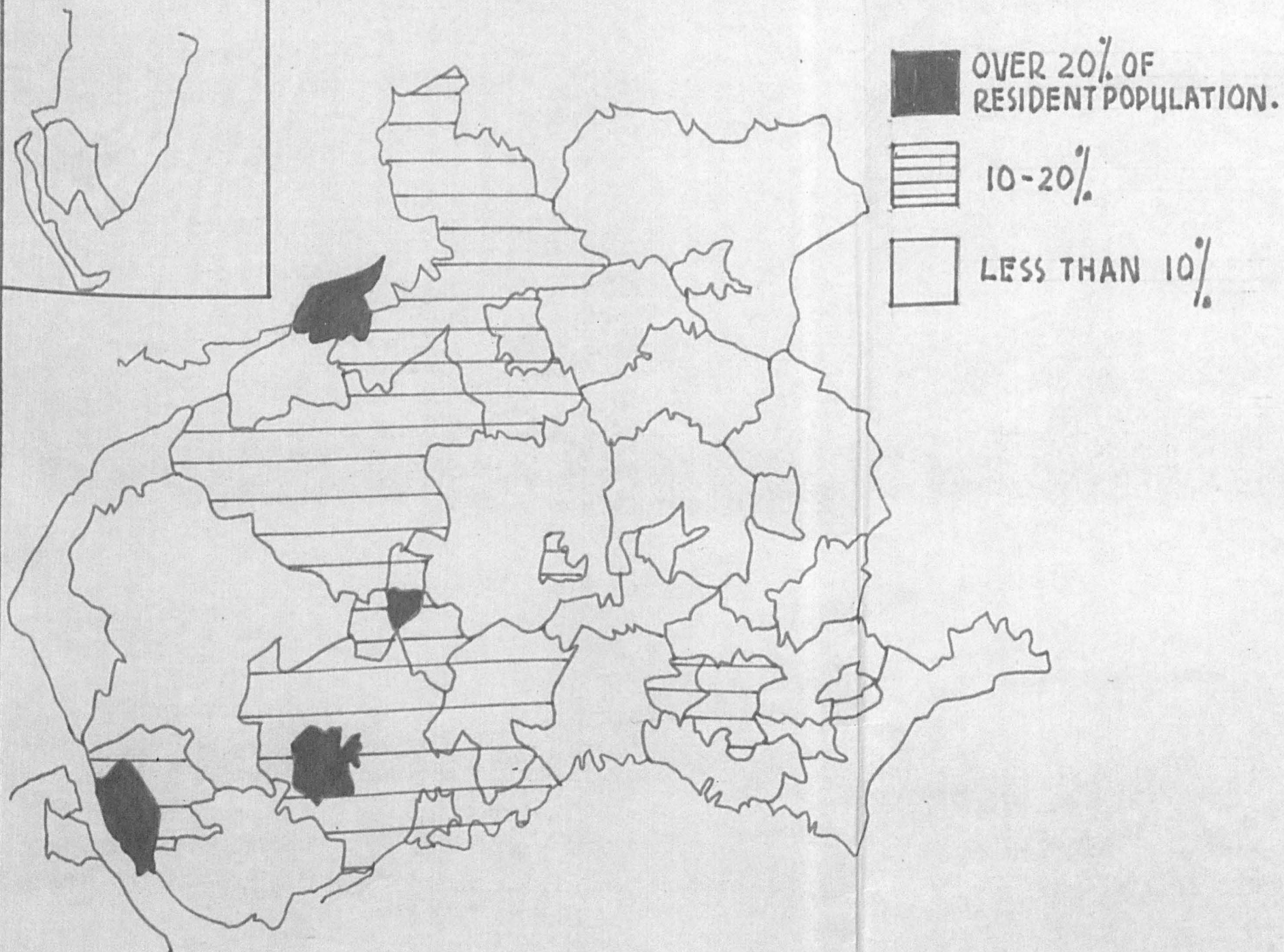


CATHOLIC...



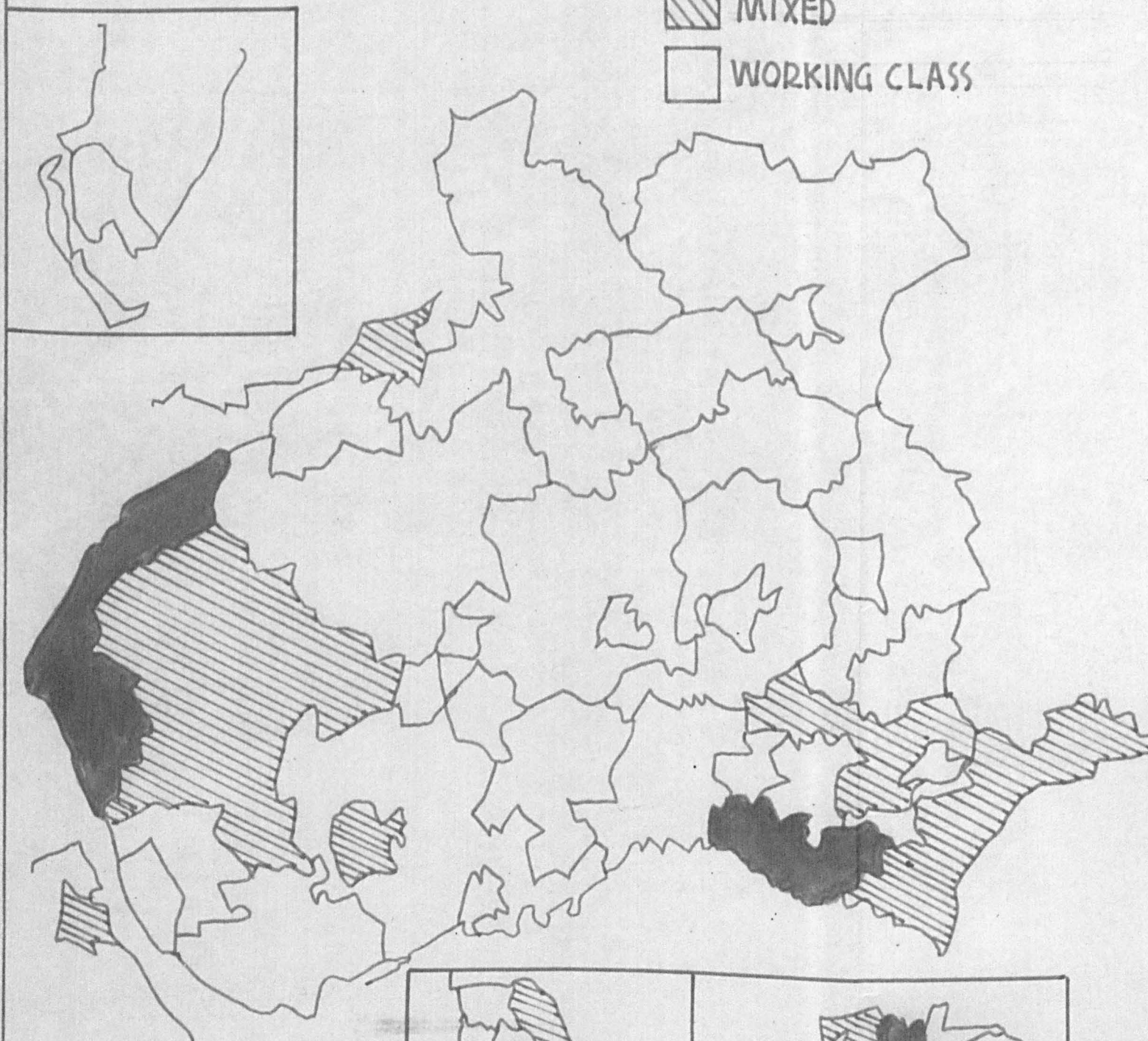
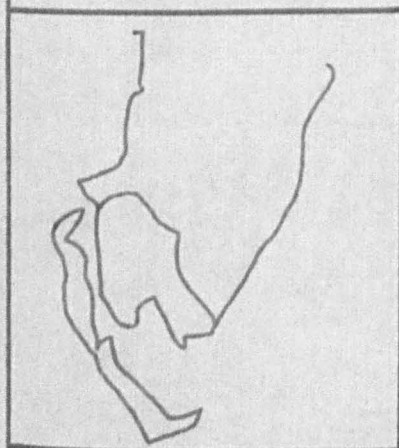
CATHOLIC POPULATION 1900-05..

SALFORD DIOCESAN ALMANAC 1900; GUIDE TO THE QUARENTE ORE 1902;
CATHOLIC FAMILY ANNUAL 1905;





SOCIAL CHARACTER OF LANCASHIRE CONSTITUENCIES...

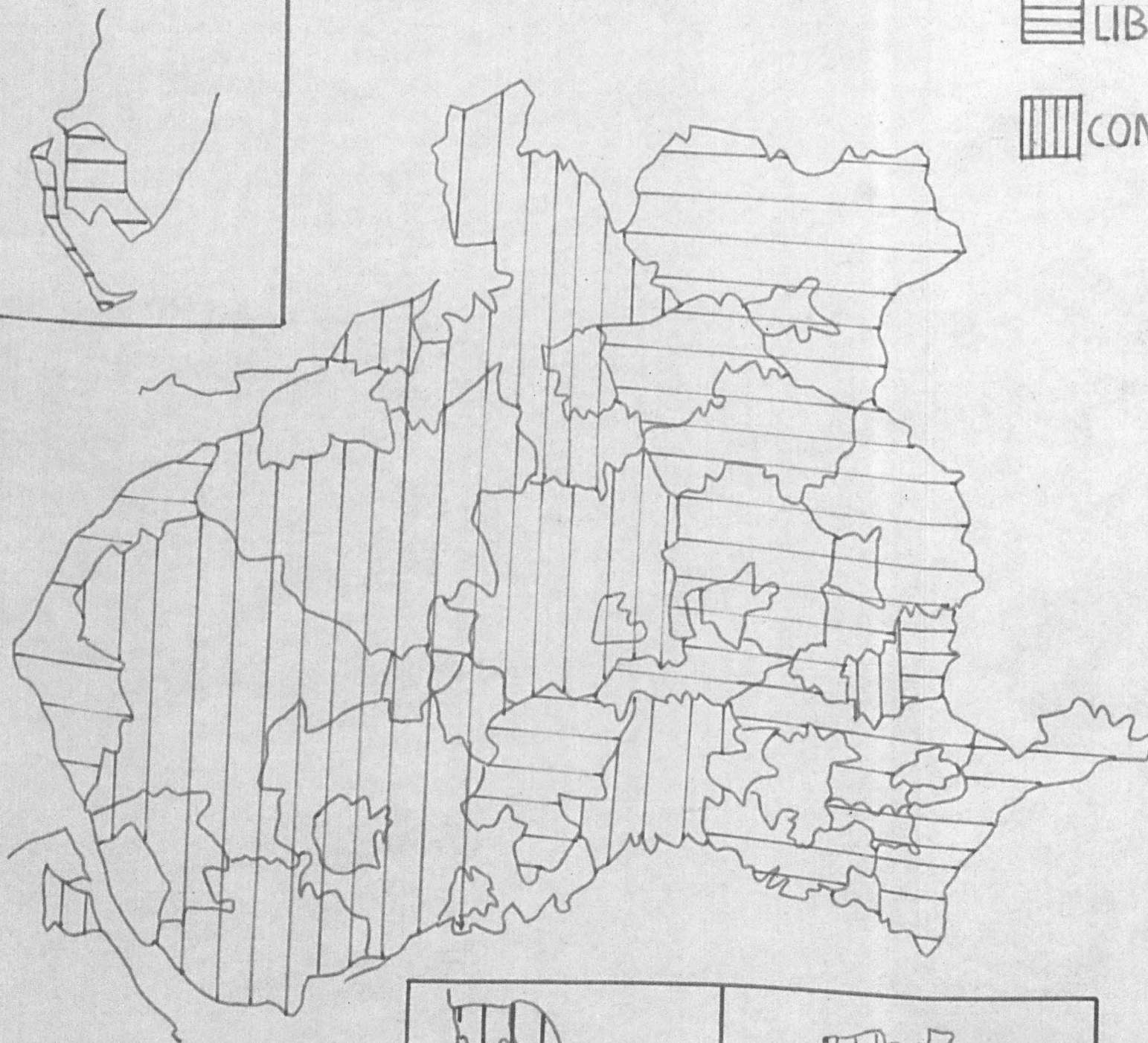
- MAINLY MIDDLE CLASS
- MIXED
- WORKING CLASS



DISTRIBUTION OF PARTY SUPPORT. 1885...

 LIBERAL

 CONSERVATIVE





NEVER CONSERVATIVE...



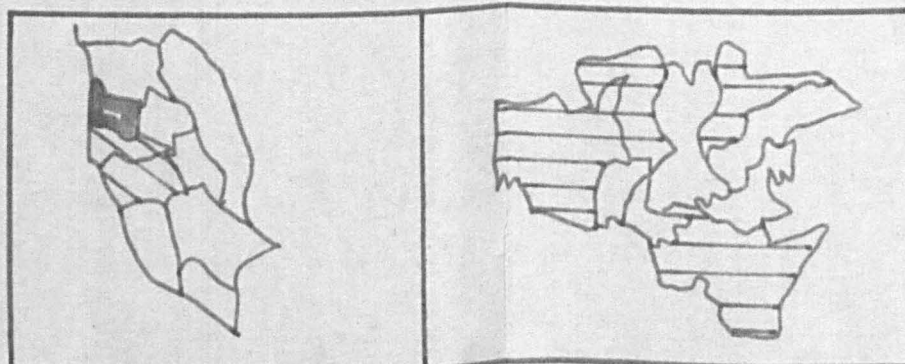
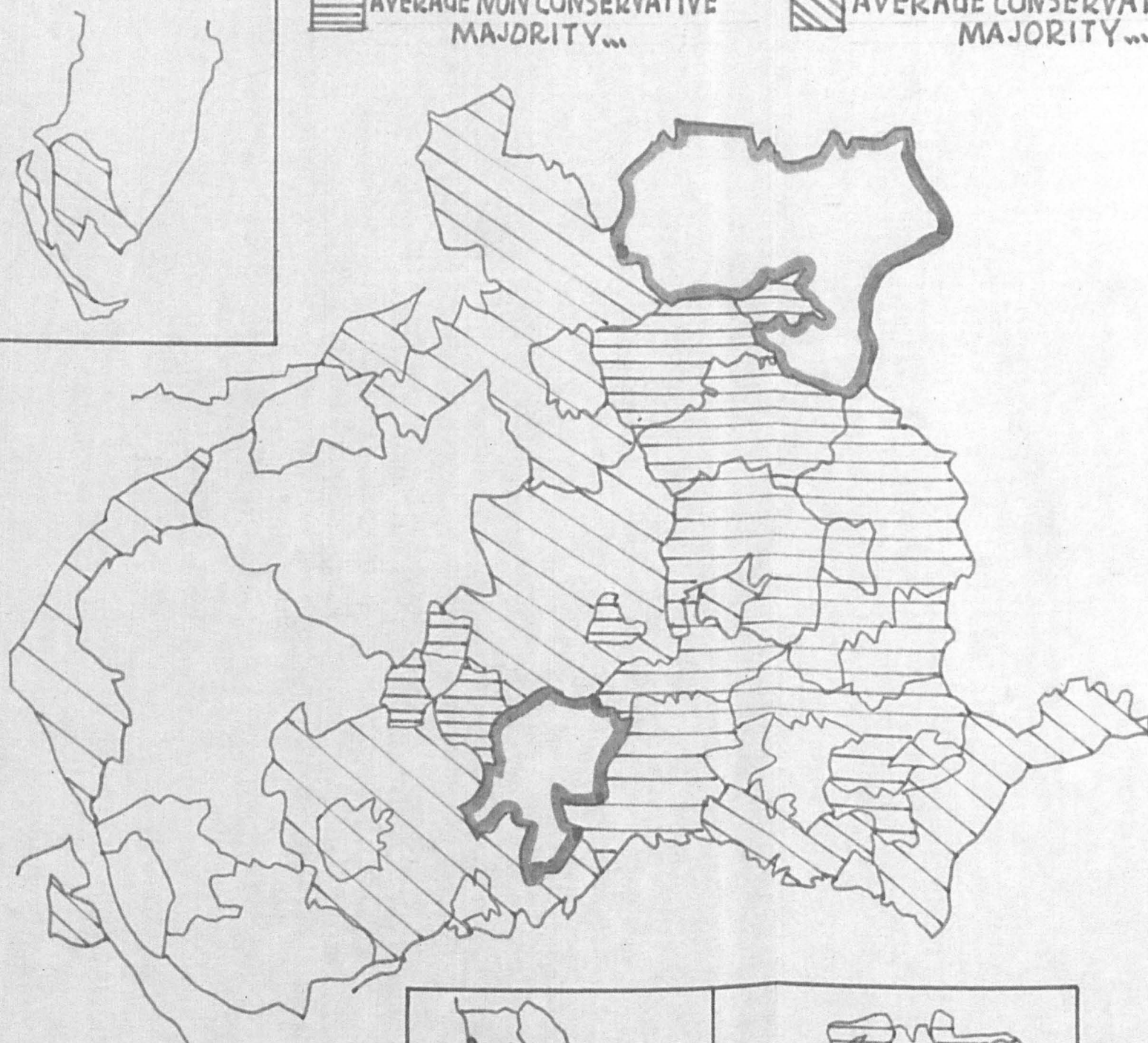
CONSERVATIVE SAFE SEATS...



AVERAGE NON CONSERVATIVE
MAJORITY...



AVERAGE CONSERVATIVE
MAJORITY...



LABOUR SEATS. 1918~1935...



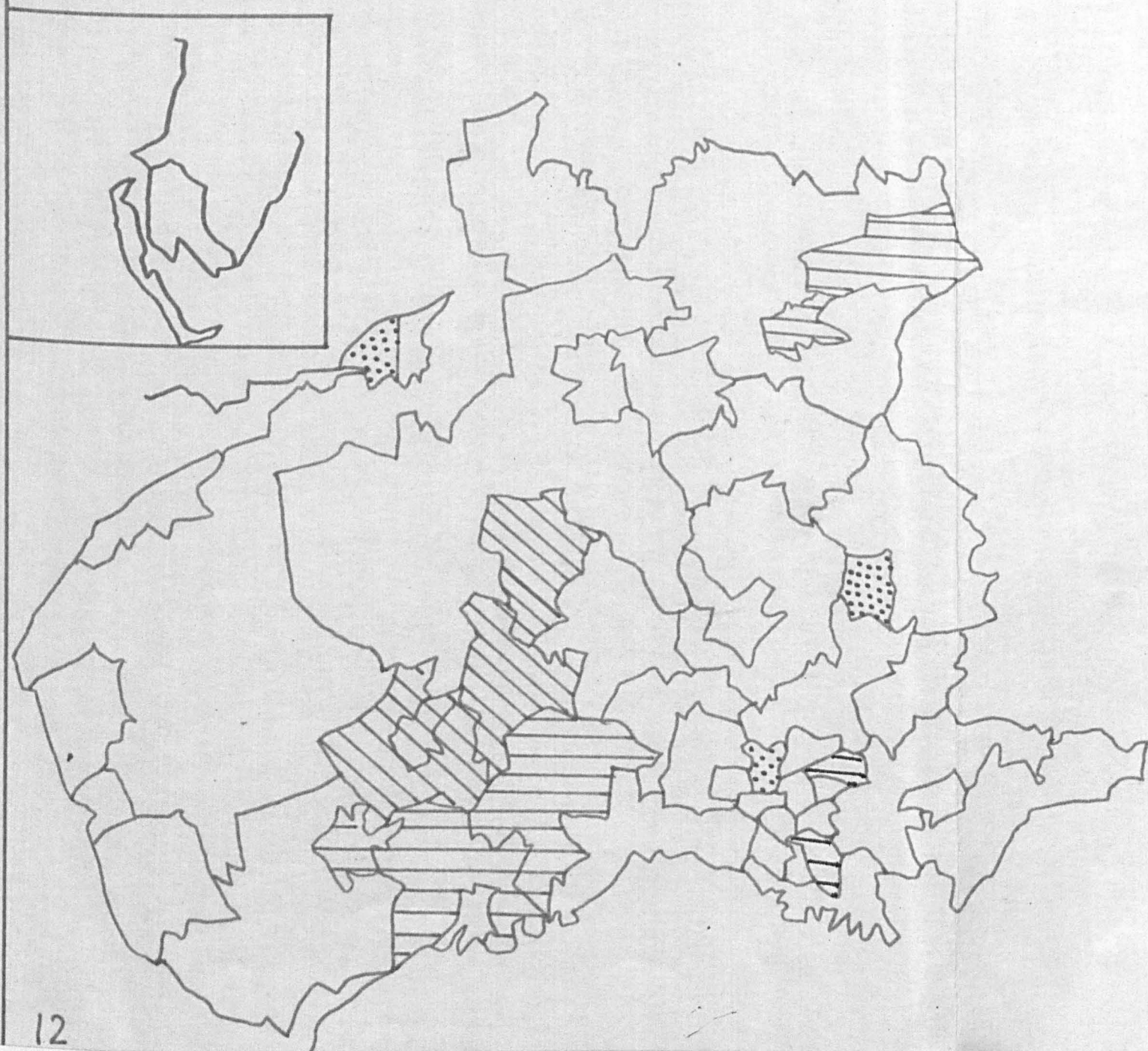
SAFE SEATS...



HELD 1918-1935 WITH ONE EXCEPTION...



HELD ON AVERAGE BY LABOUR...



INTRODUCTION

One of the chief features of the late Victorian political scene was its local variety. The main currents of national politics were identifiable through such issues as Home Rule, which had some relevance to most parts of the country, and through the personalities of politicians like Gladstone, Chamberlain and A. J. Balfour, yet people probably responded more to local questions than they did to national conditions at election times. The result was a richly varied political fabric, as Dr. H. M. Pelling has shown in his recent guide to the regions of England in the generation before 1914. ⁽¹⁾ Because these variations in behaviour were more marked than they are today the historian who attempts to plot the course of political change during the late nineteenth century soon faces problems if he adopts a macrocosmic approach. Valuable though such methods can be in advancing broad theories they are strictly limited because of the many local peculiarities, which sooner or later have to be given closer inspection; it is at this point that the case study comes into its own.

The same applied to political parties during this period. They derived much less from central direction than they do today, relying upon local initiative and money for their influence and support in the provincial constituencies. So it is with the history of the early Labour party. Although it emerged as a national organisation at Westminster in 1900 its development, the way in which it arrived on the national scene, can best be studied by looking at local responses to working class problems. In general we may speak of the Labour party's significance as lying in its heralding the arrival of modern political behaviour, based

largely on class loyalties, and marking the end of the sectional attitudes which shaped behaviour during the nineteenth century. This is quite a useful interpretation of Labour's significance. But how true would it be of the Labour organisation in the West Riding, or South Wales, or London before the first World War? The truth is that the pace of change varied greatly from one region to another; for instance, Labour voting was making clear headway in Lancashire before 1914, but in the East Midlands and North Staffordshire it had not disturbed the traditional Conservative and Liberal alignment very much at all. Why was this? Answers can only come through a closer analysis of regional trends and, thus, as the writing of Labour history becomes more respected and more specialised the aim must be to build up a series of case studies of working class politics. The present study aims at providing one such.

Lancashire is the region chosen and a variety of factors have determined the choice. For one thing, Lancashire almost selects itself. At the turn of the century it was so important an industrial region that it cannot be ignored in any study of British politics. It contained the cotton industry, which provided more exports than any other single industry. It possessed a population of over 4 millions which made up a tenth of the national electorate returning nearly 60 MPs. It was an electoral area surpassed in size and significance only by London. Its social structure was very strongly working class which gave it particular relevance to the growth of Labour politics. In 1906 the parliamentary breakthrough of the Labour party was more marked in Lancashire than anywhere else in the country. Moreover, Lancashire had always exhibited a very interesting political behaviour; for an area of such working class strength the

Liberal party, generally accepted to be the Workman's party, was surprisingly weak there. So, because of all these attributes, a study of Lancashire politics may reasonably be regarded as justified. Something further: Lancashire has received little attention and deserves some attention now, to redress previous neglect.

In spite of the growth of Labour feeling in Lancashire during the 1890's and early 1900's the region had not won a reputation for being particularly progressive in its politics. Even during the years when the political Labour movement was beginning to capture the public's attention Lancashire appeared fairly dormant for such a big industrial region. It had the appearance of being rather arrogant and insular: "What Lancashire does today the rest of the world does tomorrow". The county had always seemed more concerned with its own problems than with those affecting the rest of England, more ready to pursue respectable endeavours than to engage in violent action. For example, in his tour of the manufacturing towns during 1842 W. Cooke Taylor clearly did not come across any "red" revolutionaries⁽²⁾, yet it was at Rochdale, in Lancashire, that the Co-operative movement was established in the mid 'forties. As far as Chartism was concerned Lancashire workmen seemed more interested in paying their respects at its symbolic death than they had been to support it during its heyday - 50,000 turned up for the funeral of Ernest Jones at Manchester in 1869.⁽³⁾ During the mid Victorian period the Lancashire operatives subscribed to their trade unions and co-op societies⁽⁴⁾ and working class leaders came to see their life's work as culminating not at the barricades, but on the magistrate's bench. Richard Cobden summed up this quietism very well: in Manchester, he said, people would

accept "uncompromising language against the aristocracy" from Anti-Corn Law Leaguers like himself, whilst "they would shrink into their natural conservatism,..... if the same language were used in reference to the 'ballot' etc." (5) This sounds another way of saying that Lancashire people were two-faced, if not pusillanimous, in politics and it is perhaps not surprising that in the mythology of radicalism Lancashire has shrunk in significance alongside the Birmingham of Joseph Chamberlain's mayoralty.

In the historiography of the Labour movement the same has also been true. After the Third Reform Act Lancashire contributed to none of the generally accepted landmarks in the development of the Labour party. From this point of view, the focus is always directed elsewhere - the foundation of the Social Democratic Federation in London, the Mid Lanark bye-election of 1887, the London Dock Strike of 1889, the Independent Labour Party's establishment in the West Riding during the early 'nineties, the Taff Vale issue. At the 1899 Trades Union Congress, when the motion to set up a Labour Representation Committee was accepted, it is usually the Lancashire cotton union leaders who are quoted as examples of diehard opponents to such a move. Nonetheless, in 1906 Lancashire contributed 13 Labour MPs; this was by far the biggest regional contingent in a parliamentary party possessing only 30 members.

To be sure, the justification for examining Lancashire in detail from 1885 to 1906 lies in the fact that the conditions existing at this time were most propitious for Labour success in the region. The initial Labour representation of 13 constituted a substantial proportion of the seats the Labour party could expect to win in the region at any time before 1945. Only twice, in fact, did the party improve significantly on

its 1906 performance up to the General Election of 1945. (6) In contrast, other regions like London, South Wales and the West of Scotland experienced their flowering of Labour politics after the first World War, during the years when Lancashire's relative position in the party was declining. From this point of view Lancashire appears to be an example of precocity in the parliamentary Labour movement.

One factor that has tended to detract from this position is the political complexion of the early Lancashire Labour MPs. In 1906 all but one belonged to what today would be called the "right wing" of the party; they were trade unionists who regarded Labour politics as simply a new back-cloth to industrial bargaining and were certainly not moved by socialist thinking. Their attitude was expressed by the Cotton Factory Times' advice on the future course of the new Labour party in 1906: "to begin with the party should go in for a practical policy." (7) It was this kind of mentality that prompted an I.L.P. observer to conclude of Lancashire three years later: "in no great section of the industrial class is the progress towards their social ideals less pronounced." (8)

But the early Labour breakthrough and its significance was only one of the special characteristics exhibited in the politics of Lancashire. The political climate after 1885 brought into prominence other developments. Walter Bagehot, noting the tempo of political change in England, argued in the second edition of his great book that the effect of electoral reform was never abruptly felt, that people still continued to adopt ideas inherited from the previous system, whilst the new one "is not really tested till it comes to be worked by statesmen and among a people neither of whom are guided by a different experience." (9) So it was in Lancashire, where none of the region's mid Victorian attitudes enjoyed

such lasting strength as working class Conservatism. For this feature alone the region deserves investigation. The Third Reform Act of 1884 strengthened Lancashire's Conservatism, which had been growing since the 1860's ⁽¹⁰⁾, while the Liberal party declined until its temporary revival at the turn of the century. The strong Tory tendencies among Lancashire's heavily working class population have been noted by many writers, but few have given the problem adequate attention; lacking the opportunity to conduct opinion polls historians have too often explained this phenomenon in terms of deference or apathy ⁽¹¹⁾, although the best recent survey of the region, H. M. Pelling's essay in his Social Geography of British Elections (1967) casts doubts on previous interpretations and opens the way for new thought.

Similarly there is a need to look more closely at the local development of such national movements as the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party. The history of the S.D.F. in Lancashire is interesting enough to cause some misgivings about the attention previously directed by historians almost solely at its London based group of leaders. From the early 1890's, however, S.D.F. branches in Lancashire were usually as numerous as those in London and often as vigorous. It was, significantly, to Burnley that H. M. Hyndman went on four occasions to seek election to Parliament as an S.D.F. candidate. In short, the dictum of Dr. Hobsbawm may be applied to the S.D.F. in Lancashire: "it cannot simply be approved, it cannot be simply condemned. It certainly cannot be dismissed." ⁽¹²⁾ The lack of local study of the I.L.P. has also been noted by one of the party's more recent historians. ⁽¹³⁾ Yet only by looking at its local roots may we test the assertions of some early I.L.P.

partisans who attempted to explain its growth in terms of its social and religious appeal ⁽¹⁴⁾;" it lacked the rigid clarity of Marxism, yet it was well suited to English trade unionists," is the verdict of a more recent sociological investigation of the I.L.P. ⁽¹⁵⁾ But how far are either of these assessments correct?

Since the present study will concentrate on the interaction between the trade union and socialist traditions in the development of working class politics, and it is now necessary to define some of the terms used and outline some of the problems encountered in presenting this subject.

In the first place the region chosen is defined by its economic characteristics rather than by administrative boundaries. For this reason three parliamentary divisions in the administrative county of Lancashire - Blackpool, Lancaster and North Lonsdale - have been omitted from consideration because they were agricultural and residential areas and not at all industrial. On the other hand the districts of Ashton under Lyne, Stockport, Hyde and Birkenhead have been included, even though they fell, either wholly or in part, within the county of Cheshire, because of their industrial interests. However, in order to preserve the integrity of the district between the rivers Ribble and Mersey it has been thought best to take into consideration the rural areas of West Lancashire around Southport, Ormskirk and Chorley, even though these were very similar in economic character to the areas excluded. Despite this apparent artificiality the region under investigation constitutes a well integrated whole, having common interests through the interdependent nature of its industrial structure. Finally, it remains to be mentioned that there is one outlier - the town of Barrow in Furness, an iron and steel producing

centre on the fringes of the Lake District.

Another term that is frequently used in the following chapters is "working class". As a broad working basis class is defined according to economic situation in the Marxian sense. The working class can thereby be described as it existed in relation to the means of production; those who own the means of production and who control finance capital are bourgeois whilst those who are hired to work for wages are members of the working class. Broadly speaking, therefore, the working class are wage earners. Such a definition is, of course, rather too schematic since class barriers were constantly infiltrated; the self employed artisan who hired a few workers posed the greatest problem for he might be bourgeois one day and proletarian the next, depending on economic fluctuations. (16) Another difficulty is presented by "self-assigned" class - the status category in which the individual would have placed himself. Nonetheless, for the purposes of political study, an objective definition offers the most suitable approach since it allows a wide area of investigation within which any group subjectively defining themselves as non-working class are quickly perceived.

One of the greatest problems in dealing with political behaviour in the period before universal suffrage lies in assessing the influence of working class people at the polls. Even in such a pronounced working class area as Lancashire the electoral system was weighted in favour of the middle classes. The third Reform Act of 1884 extended the franchise to include owners and tenants of property in both borough and county constituencies, but universal adult male suffrage did not come until 1918 and the proportion of men entitled to vote was often quite low. Being based on property qualifications the voting right was therefore the more

secure for wealthy people, many of whom could in fact vote twice by virtue of holding borough freehold property (carrying a vote in both the borough and in the county within which the borough was situated) or by owning business premises (which allowed the owner to vote in both the constituency of his residence and his business). The additional proviso of 12 months continuous residence in a constituency in order to qualify for a place on the electoral register was a severe disability to working men, especially those in large cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Salford where a labourer might require to change his residence fairly regularly in order to find employment and thus have to move into a different parliamentary division. Lodger voters, largely working class people, found it extremely difficult to qualify at all because of rental requirements and uncertain definitions of their status; the proportion of lodgers qualified to vote at Liverpool and Manchester in 1911 was barely more than 3 per cent of the electorate. (17)

Thus in what might seem at first sight ^{a strongly} working class constituency the greater part of the electorate might well have been middle class. (18)

In many ways local elections offered working class electors and candidates a better chance, and it was at local level that the first significant moves were made to secure labour representation. At such elections female suffrage operated whilst in School Board elections a voter had some dozen votes which he might "plump" for a single candidate, so that with a carefully directed body of support labour campaigners had a fair chance of success. But by far the most serious obstacle to labour representation was money. Political campaigns were costly affairs at this time and a candidate required not only ample funds but, in addition, an army of willing helpers to do the necessary canvassing;

moreover, a competent registration agent to direct the campaign was an expensive item, as were conveyances to bring people to the polls. All these aids were more readily available to middle class groups than they were to Labour candidates in fighting elections and it is not surprising that the key factor in a working class campaign was the availability of trade union funds.

One final difficulty for the historian who deals with Lancashire politics at the turn of the century lies in the lack of major studies on the subject. Until recently the field has been quite fallow. (19) The more specific topic of working class political development has been even more neglected. Especially striking is the lack of a historical work on the cotton unions to supplement H. A. Turner's valuable Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy (1962). A full scale study of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation has yet to appear. There are surprisingly few monographs on any aspect of working class political life in the region. (20) So the task with Lancashire is to establish a historical account with raw material that is not always easily manageable. Whilst there are some excellent economic and social studies of Lancashire towns (21) they are too few in number and the regional historian must come to terms at an early stage with local histories and handbooks, census returns and trade union reports and, above all, the immense wealth of material contained in the pages of local newspapers.

PART ONE

Setting: The Background to Working Class Politics

The fortunes and characteristics of the Labour party, as of all political parties, were determined by the social and economic climate in which it developed. In the following six chapters, therefore, we look at the basic elements that shaped the course of working class politics in the Lancashire industrial region during the twenty years after the Third Reform Act.

The social and economic patterns of the region (Chapter 1) gave rise to the particular brands of trade unionism examined in Chapters 2 - 4. In the unions lay the roots of an independent development in working class politics. By the mid 1880s they were the strongest expression of working class interest; the two groups best placed to influence politics were the cotton workers and the miners and their policies are examined to assess the likely outcome of their position in working class politics (Chapters 2 and 3) whilst the other group of unions - the "new" unions formed at the end of the 1880s - provide a different example of trade union political behaviour (Chapter 4).

At the beginning of this period working class political loyalties at parliamentary level were split between the Conservative and Liberal parties. The question of how successful the traditional parties were in winning votes between 1885 and 1906 is considered in Chapter 5; in the following chapter attention is directed to the bases of party loyalty and the prospect of critical change in electoral behaviour.

THE REGION

The industrial region of Lancashire lies between the river Ribble and the river Mersey. To the east it is bounded by the Pennines, which separate it from the industrial towns of the West Riding of Yorkshire, whilst its western edge stretches almost to the Irish Sea coast. This area, covering some 1,600 square miles, is identified by its industrial character and thus has a quite different economic appearance from other parts of the North West, particularly those to the north of the Ribble and to the south of the Mersey, which at the end of the nineteenth century were largely agricultural.

1 Industry

Lancashire's industrial development dates from the beginning of the cotton trade in the region during the seventeenth century. During the following two hundred years Britain experienced an industrial revolution that had been based initially on an expansion of cotton production and by the late 1700's Lancashire had become one of the foremost industrial districts in the country. The region possessed early advantages for cotton manufacturing - good port facilities at Liverpool and a ready supply of cheap coal - and these enabled its interest in the fustian trade to be transferred comparatively easily to the mass production of cotton goods. By the 1790's the agronomist Holt, surveying local agricultural developments in Lancashire, acknowledged that by then the area had already become "famous for its manufacturers" ⁽¹⁾ and by the early nineteenth century Lancashire had established its primacy as a cotton producing

district over all others.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Lancashire still retained its position as one of the foremost industrial regions in the British Isles ⁽²⁾ and its reliance on cotton was still very pronounced (table 1). During the nineteenth century output of Lancashire cotton mills had increased year by year, the peak being achieved in 1913 when the total of raw cotton consumption in Britain was 2,178 million pounds: in 1800 it had been 52 millions and in 1850 588 millions. ⁽³⁾ This seemingly inexorable rise in cotton output produced in Lancashire an unshakeable belief in the industry's strength; on the eve of the First World War cotton employed over half a million people in the region and accounted for more exports than any other single British industry. Not surprisingly, then, an observer of pre-war Lancashire noted that "if the Lancashire of 1880 had been quietly proud and the Lancashire of 1900 aloofly proud, the new Lancashire was arrogant." ⁽⁴⁾

Many of the other industries that had grown up in the region were directly linked to cotton. Coalmining, for instance, had become important to provide power for the local mills and throughout this period the biggest part of Lancashire's coal production was consumed within the county. ⁽⁵⁾ The coalfield, a difficult one to mine because of its geological complexities, was extensively and often wastefully exploited during the nineteenth century to meet the demands of the cotton trade and consequently began to experience problems of readjustment sooner than most other English coalfields. Engineering was another occupation geared to a large extent to cotton: much of the output of engineering

works was made up of textile machinery and boilers, either for Lancashire mills or for export to overseas cotton industries. The building industry, accounting for a comparatively high proportion of the region's labour, as in most other regions, was also affected by the fortunes of the dominant trade, though in a different way from mining and engineering; building was a purely domestic trade and was therefore less affected by fluctuations in the export trade yet its prosperity in Lancashire may have been measured in large part by the demand for private housing and industrial premises in the cotton towns. (6)

So it may be said that about a half of the region's labour force was, to a greater or lesser extent, affected by the state of the cotton trade. Was there any sign of development in less dependent trades? Engineering, to be sure, was beginning to display some signs of moving away from the dependence on cotton especially in the Manchester and Preston areas. At Manchester, before the First World War, skills that had been acquired in the making of steam engines were being diverted to motor vehicle development. At Preston a significant industrial breakthrough came with the establishment of Dick, Kerr's electrical engineering plant which began to supply the new electric tramways. Yet the other branches of engineering which were less reliant on cotton were nonetheless "old" industries - shipbuilding and the production of railway engines and rolling stock. The most significant "new" industries - chemicals and sheet glass making - were in fact running into difficulties at the end of the nineteenth century. Chemical industries had been established at Widnes, and St. Helens over fifty years before using local coal and Cheshire salt, but technological backwardness and foreign

competition were posing severe problems by the 1890's. Widnes was able to remain a major chemical producing town by improving its plants and diversifying its processes, though only after a period of uncertainty. (7)

At St. Helens there began a rapid decline, so much so that by the 1920's all the chemical works had been closed down. It was fortunate, therefore, that the town retained an important glass industry based on the Pilkington family works. (8)

As for other trades and occupations there was little capable of sustaining a regional economy. As might be expected in a heavily industrialised area there was quite a high proportion of people employed in professional and service capacities - managers, clerks, hotel and innkeepers, transport staffs and so forth - though the demand for them was conditional upon the buoyancy of the basic industries. Agriculture was not a prominent employer of labour although south west Lancashire possessed some fertile land for crop growing: it was in fact one of England's main potato producing areas. The size of agricultural holdings in the region tended to be smaller than the national average, being mostly below 50 acres at the turn of the century, but intensive farming methods permitted maximum output with a fairly small labour force. (9)

As may be judged from table 2, then, the economy of Lancashire at the turn of the century was heavily reliant on the cotton trade. There were very few towns where the workforce was not primarily employed in one or another of the great Victorian staple industries, so that if the prosperity of the traditional economy began to decline Lancashire would feel the effects most sharply.

What did the future hold? Since about one in every two of the region's

workers

/was affected by the cotton industry's ability to sell its products, it is perhaps pertinent to ask about the likely future development of this trade. At this stage the dangers of relying on a narrowly based economic structure were not to be demonstrated so devastatingly in Lancashire as they were to be during the 1920's and 1930's, yet after about 1880 the signs of weakness were emerging and Lancashire was beginning to experience periodic, short term upsets as a result of the increasing fluctuations in cotton trading.

The real problem lay in cotton's being an export trade. Probably two thirds of its output, and more than this proportion of its total value of products, were exported. The industry was therefore particularly sensitive to foreign conditions, both as regards supply, all of which was imported, and demand. Supply of raw cotton was not often seriously affected during the later nineteenth century, certainly no shortages as serious as those of the "cotton famine" during the American Civil War of the 1860's occurring at this time. Demand, however, presented a more serious problem. There was a variety of reasons for this, the main one being that Lancashire could not hope indefinitely to maintain its leading position as the world's supplier of cotton goods. The ease with which developing nations could set up cotton industries was already being demonstrated on the European continent and in the USA. By the end of the century Lancashire had lost these markets to domestic producers who sometimes had the advantage of being able to operate behind tariff barriers. Moreover, because of the "horizontal integration" of the Lancashire mills, that is their near total specialisation in either spinning or weaving, and the further localised concentration of these two

branches of the industry within the region, rising competition from overseas tended to affect some areas of Lancashire worse than others; for example, centres producing coarse goods - the inferior quality cloths - were the first to feel competition from foreigners and towns like Oldham, the focal point of the coarse spinning trade, and Blackburn, the major coarse weaving centre, began to be affected by the world situation sooner than places like Bolton and Nelson, which specialised in finer quality goods. In addition, the whole industry could be hit by conditions in the markets of India and China upon which Lancashire had come to rely heavily at the turn of the century. During the 1890's alone both markets were disrupted; China by the Boxer troubles of 1900 and India more severely by the adoption of a protective tariff in 1893 and by the famine which occurred there during the later 'nineties. The gradual decline in the eastern silver currencies posed a further problem for Lancashire, rendering its exports more expensive for Indian and Chinese purchasers and explaining the attention paid in Lancashire to bimetallist schemes for manipulating exchange rates. (10) Another factor which affected Lancashire, in common with other industrial districts, was the "trade cycle" - the regular troughs and crests in output occurring on four occasions between 1880 and 1914. (11) The downswing phase of the cycle usually brought short-time working in the cotton industry and demands from employers for wage reductions and coincided with the worst periods of industrial relations. The effects of the trade cycle on the cotton industry, along with the problems of foreign competition and the state of overseas markets all combined to produce a marked deceleration of output in the later years of the nineteenth century. (12) The industry was in a far less

healthy condition than it had been during the mid-Victorian period.

All these developments had a significant effect on the management structure of the cotton industry. Cotton had traditionally been manufactured by small to medium sized family firms and at the beginning of the 1880's there were over 1,500 individual establishments in the spinning and weaving sections. But as competition increased there was an appreciable trend towards larger scale units which were sometimes brought under the control of a single company. The aims of amalgamation varied from the need to achieve economies in production, administration and marketing to the desire for standardising prices at a relatively higher level and thus increase profit margins. The most notable example of this trend was the Fine Cotton Spinners and Doublers Association, formed in 1898 out of 31 firms in cotton spinning and with a total capitalization of almost £8½ millions. Such giants were rare in England at this time, of course, and the Fine Cotton Spinners had no equal in cotton; nonetheless joint stock enterprise, especially in the spinning trade, was responsible for a marked increase in the size of firms. (13)

This development did not in the long run save Lancashire's cotton industry but it was an essential feature of the region's economic structure by the turn of the century and in common with the other features displayed it exerted considerable influence on the region's political characteristics. The same is true of the social structure and relationships of Lancashire, to an investigation of which we should now turn.

2 Social Structure and Social Relationships

The industry of Lancashire had important effects upon the region's social structure. The incidence of heavy industry meant that there was a limited range of occupations with a high proportion of people engaged in employment for weekly wages. (Tables 3 and 4). The overall impression is that ^{of} an area with a pronounced working class character.

This picture would also tend to suggest a tradition of working class action through co-operatives, trade unions, religious sects, political groups and so on. To a certain extent this was true yet it would be misleading to underemphasise the importance, in social terms, of middle class influence and leadership. During the 1880's H. M. Hyndman, one of the founders of the Social Democratic Federation, spoke of Northern England in general as having "no middle class to break the force of collision between the capitalist and those whom he employs", ⁽¹⁴⁾ but this observation suggests the wrong conclusions about the nature of social relationship in large parts of Lancashire; although the professional and managerial classes, and even the "black coated" workers following clerical pursuits, were numerically small they were still able to exercise an influence on their communities. The reason is partly to be found in the industrial structure of the region.

During the nineteenth century Lancashire experienced an immense increase of its population; from 672,500 in 1800 to over $4\frac{3}{4}$ millions by 1911. The dispersal of these people, however, was determined by the location of industry and varied as between the localised communities of the cotton districts and the big conurbations of Manchester and Liverpool. Regional specialisation in the cotton industry, which had become fairly

settled by the middle years of the century, is a particularly important feature in this process. The spinning trade was located in south east Lancashire whilst weaving came to be carried out in the towns and villages in the north east section of the coalfield. The mill economy of Manchester, described by Elizabeth Gaskell in her novel of the 1840's, Mary Barton, declined fairly quickly and the town took on the responsibilities of a commercial centre and provincial metropolis, the hub of a growing conurbation. (15) Liverpool, as the region's major port, similarly assumed a commercial character and became the focal point for urban development on Merseyside. By the 1860's, therefore, there was developing a marked contrast between the cotton towns and the areas being enveloped by the big cities. The cotton towns were able to retain a separate identity, being largely self-supporting and self-contained; the working populations became stabilised around a fairly well defined nucleus with a minimum amount of commuting to and from work required. As a result the social integrity of the communities was maintained, the classes not becoming separated by any great distances. Thus, both middle class and working people could still participate in the same social and political life. The bridge between them was not yet broken. This was as true of the larger towns like Blackburn, Oldham and Bolton as of the smaller manufacturing towns like Great Harwood or Padiham, and a measure of this feature is provided by the manner in which the whole of the cotton district was dealt with in the Redistribution Act of 1885. Although the Act was designed to redraw the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies according to the pursuits of the population the only action taken was to give the larger cotton towns double representation;

it proved impossible to create viable middle class constituencies. Consequently, whilst the constituencies in this district were predominantly working class in character there was none which did not contain an element of middle class influence.

In contrast to the neat topography of the cotton districts the southern area of the region was beginning to experience urban sprawl. Although the mining and chemical towns around Wigan and St. Helens shared many of the features of the cotton districts Liverpool and Manchester were swallowing up their more immediate neighbours. By the turn of the century Manchester and its environs had a total population of over two millions, whilst Merseyside possessed over one million. On the eve of the First World War the town planner, Patrick Geddes, predicted the growth of "another Greater London, as it were - a city region of which Liverpool is the seaport and Manchester the market...."(16) which be named "Lancaston". It is **true** that many of the smaller townships being sucked into the influence of the big cities were ancient boroughs and managed to salvage some local identity at this time (17) yet there was nonetheless a noticeable growth of suburbs with the social classes being segregated by residence and distance. This was the area in which middle class people were withdrawing into their own localities and losing touch with the working class. (see **Map 2.**)

Commerce and trade were drawing Liverpool and Manchester closer together, with the extension of the Mersey waterfront and the construction of the Ship Canal in the 1890's with its attendant trades. At the Liverpool end of the axis the newer docks built during the later nineteenth century went further inland than the original ones near the city centre,

forcing the wealthier classes further inland still. With the introduction of cheap workmen's trains in the 1880's ⁽¹⁸⁾ it became possible for the better off artisan to move out of the more crowded districts. Liverpool consequently developed a very marked three tier residential pattern: the historic city centre was largely abandoned to the immigrant Irish, whilst an inner residential zone comprising such areas as Toxteth, Everton and Kirkdale contained the indigenous working class and a distant peripheral area for the professional people developed out of previously outlying villages such as Garston, Allerton and Childwall. ⁽¹⁹⁾ The opening of the Mersey railway in 1886 and its electrification in 1903 enabled more prosperous businessmen to settle in the Wirral but it was not until after the First World War, and particularly after the building of a road tunnel in the 1930's, that suburban growth really boomed on the south bank of the Mersey.

Liverpool was thus able to expand into the agricultural land of south west Lancashire, but Manchester's middle class could move only southwards. To the north was the cotton district whilst the Ship Canal had, but the turn of the century, joined up the western townships of Eccles, Patricroft and Barton and was to lead to the creation of an industrial estate at Trafford Park in Stretford, which had been a fairly middle class area in the 1880's. To escape industrialisation the wealthier Mancunians followed the rail lines south. In the twenty years before 1914 Manchester Corporation added only one northern district, Heaton Park, to its administration whilst at the same time big extensions of the city boundaries were taking place to the south and providing recently settled populations with additional public services. With the accretions of

Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Didsbury, Moss Side, Burnage and Withington in 1904 Manchester's population increased by 63,000 and five years later Levenshulme was added. (20) All were at this time mainly middle class residential suburbs.

The social patterns of the region therefore display a sharp contrast between the industrial communities of the cotton and mining districts and the growing conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester. At the turn of the century the degree of involvement by middle class people in the community life of the industrial towns was still significant and had important effects on the political character of these areas, as may be judged from Philip Snowden's account of electioneering in 1900 at Blackburn, a town of over 100,000 people. (21) On the other hand the working class was being increasingly left to its own devices in the bigger cities.

However, the situation was complicated by a further factor: the structure of industry and its effects on the development of working class solidarity. The process of industrial rationalisation, especially marked in cotton, had, by the end of the century, been carried through two distinct stages; first had come the regional specialisation of cotton production which generally tended to separate weaving and spinning and, secondly, the gradual merging of production into larger units. These developments had an important effect on those towns in which relationships between the classes were closer, for it was precisely in these areas that a community of interest among working people was more likely to develop - an apparently paradoxical situation. The reason lies in the effects of rationalisation upon trades unionism. It seems likely, in fact, that as a result of the processes discussed there developed a greater degree of occupational homogeneity (table 3) which assisted the growth of trades unionism.

It might be worth pausing for a moment to consider this association. Figures of trade union membership for this period are, unfortunately, not very reliable and it is difficult to obtain a sufficiently wide coverage of figures for various trades to make comparisons. For the local weaving societies, however, there exists a reasonably good set of membership figures which allow us to investigate the nature of trade union strength against the occupational background. Map 3 shows the dispersal of trade union membership in the two biggest groups of unions, the cotton workers and miners (see also tables 5, 6 and 9); following from this it would appear that it proved easier to organise workers where the labour force was more homogeneous and the manufacturing process more standardised. The weaving towns provide the best example, for not only were they dominated by a single trade but there were fewer distinctions between people engaged in weaving than in spinning, where the quite different outlook and status of spinners and cardroom workers have to be considered. If we look, for instance, at the places where over half the workforce was employed in weaving, and for which reliable trade union membership figures are available, we see that a fairly constant proportion of workers were organised: the results may be tabulated as follows:

<u>Town</u>	<u>% employed in cotton weaving c 1900</u>	<u>Approx strength of local union</u>	<u>%, cotton workers organised</u>
Blackburn	55	14,300	36
Burnley	55	9,000	32
Colne	60	3,000	41
Gt. Harwood	72	2,000	40
Haslingden	62	1,550	23
Nelson	70	5,000	40
Padiham	62	3,000	70
Rishton	62	1,500	62

Clearly the connection is not as strong in all places, as the disparity between Haslingden and Padiham shows. Why this should be is difficult to

say although it might depend on a variety of factors such as the size of a town's mills, the vigour of the local union secretary, the state of trade at any given time, the size of the town and the dispersal of the workforce, and so on. But it seems that, given a fairly high concentration on weaving the local union could expect to enrol at least two weavers out of every five.

In other textile districts where production was not so standardised, where cotton was not so much of a dominant trade and where both spinning and weaving was carried out we may observe a different pattern:

<u>Town</u>	<u>% employed in cotton c 1900</u>	<u>Approx strength of local cotton unions</u>	<u>% cotton workers organised</u>
Accrington	35	4,500	54
Bacup	50	750	12
Leigh	30	350	7
Oldham	42	17,650	58
Preston	45	6,000	23
Rochdale	45	3,700	19
Wigan	15	1,000	24

Here we see that, although in some cases the incidence of union membership is as high as in the more homogeneous towns, the overall pattern is much less consistent, with more marked fluctuations.

It may be, for example, that in a town with a relatively small number of cotton workers they nevertheless worked in a limited number of factories and the local union organisers found it easy to recruit. Such may well be the case with Oldham, the centre of the coarse spinning trade, with its many big mills built by the "limiteds" towards the end of the century. Clearly, however, a variety of factors made up the strength of trades unionism, though it would appear that in general a greater degree of standardisation helped to lay the basis for union growth. In cotton weaving towns such as Walton-le-Dale or Brierfield (for which no individual trade union membership figures are available) it must have been a very straightforward task to organise a trade union,

and enrol members with this degree of community integrity. (23) On the other hand the more mixed character of south Lancashire militated against this process; even where fairly large groups of workers in one trade existed, as in the docks at Liverpool or Bootle, the work was often irregular with a high turnover of personnel, thus making it difficult to keep together a solid base of workers on which to build a union. Hence, as will be seen in the following three chapters, trade unionism in mining and cotton developed earlier and was always stronger than that of the trades in Liverpool and Manchester.

Yet another aspect of this process was the growing scale of industry and the changing nature of management. As factories grew in size and family firms gave way to limited companies with boards of directors so the paternalist authority of the boss with his workmen disappeared, replaced by a more impersonal and far less individual relationship. In general Lancashire already had, by the late nineteenth century, a factory rather than a workshop economy (24) and the small master, Birmingham style (25) was no longer common in the manufacturing districts. There was still some small scale enterprise in the region, to be sure, notably in the old workshop quarter of Ancoats in Manchester and on the Liverpool waterfront where the worker - stevedores were still important sub-contractors of labour. But the scale of industry varied generally between the medium sized family concerns in the weaving trade and the vast industrial companies of the engineering and mining districts: between, for example, the Dugdales' family firm engaged in weaving at Blackburn and employing about 500 operatives and, on the other hand, the giant Wigan Coal and Iron Company which owned almost 30 collieries in

Lancashire and had thousands of miners on its payroll. The fact is that the bigger the workforce and the more extensive the scope of the company's production the more difficult it became for the workman to discuss his problems on an individual level with the boss. The worker's strength now lay in his trade union, that is, through collective action, and with the institutionalisation of industrial relationships there emerged a marked division between the world of the ordinary working man and the world of the bosses. (26)

Thus the social relationships which ultimately came to bear upon the political attitudes of the region were subject to contradictory pressures which added to the political and religious complexities of Lancashire. Nevertheless, it is clear that during this period there were certain factors that were beginning, in the words of Frederick Engels, "to weld the proletariat into a compact group with its own ways of life and thought and its own outlook on society." (27) The process was, of course, slow, and in consequence the development of independent political action by the working class in Lancashire was gradual. Yet in the long run the establishment of a labour party was a reflection of a more assertive working class community.

3 Religion

Of all the regions of England Lancashire was probably the most varied in its religious life, whilst its local peculiarities in religion had a profound effect on the political and social attitudes held by many Lancashire people.

The most striking religious feature of the region was the weakness

of the churches among the working class. The official religious census of 1851 showed that in every major town in the region attendance at worship was below the national average. In only three towns - Warrington, Wigan and Rochdale - was attendance above the average for large manufacturing centres, which meant that perhaps more than half the population went to church. In all the other towns attendance was limited to between 30 and 45 per cent of the population. (28) A second problem, whose complexities the census of 1851 did not sufficiently encompass, was the comparative strength of the religious denominations within this general impression of apathy. From haphazard returns it became clear that more than half of all worshippers in Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport, Ashton-under-Lyne and Bury were Nonconformists; sizeable groups existed at Wigan, Liverpool, Preston, Manchester and Salford. In none of the large towns did the Church of England have an absolute majority of worshippers, though in Wigan and Liverpool it had the largest single following. (29)

There was no further census after that of 1851 from which to gauge the changing religious position during the second half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, scattered surveys made by independent organisations during the early 1880's do help to convey the impression that nothing was changing very much. In 1881 attendance at church services at selected towns was not significantly higher than thirty years previously (Maps 4 and 5), whilst the comparative strengths of the various denominations had only marginally altered. (Maps 6 and 7.)

Lancashire owed much of its religious character to the industrial development of the region and the immense inflow of labouring people

from places such as the West Riding of Yorkshire, Wales and Ireland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The distribution of church support by the later 1800's still revealed the basic immigration patterns of the region, with Catholicism strong in the western districts where Irish people had settled and, on the eastern side of the country, an influential brand of Methodism predominating. At the same time, the weakness of religion was common to most areas which had undergone industrial change. (30) In such circumstances the Church of England usually experienced severe disadvantages as a result of its failure to adapt to demographic changes during the eighteenth century. The problem was never tackled systematically by the Anglicans in Lancashire until the third quarter of the nineteenth century; in the early 1840's, for example, Cooke Taylor noted in his Lancashire tour that "the number of the clergy of the established church in the manufacturing district is inadequate to the duties which the clerical body is bound to perform. Personal acquaintance with members of each congregation, domestic visitation and moral superintendence have become physically impossible." (31) During the second half of the century, and especially under the guidance of James Fraser, Bishop of Manchester from 1870 until 1885, the Anglican Church in the region made attempts to strengthen their position by building more churches and providing more extensive educational supervision. By the 1880's, it is true, the Church of England had succeeded in making itself the largest single denomination, although in some parts of Lancashire the combined strength of nonconformity was greater, especially in the cotton towns around Burnley and Nelson. Yet, in terms of extending their influence directly over the working population

it is doubtful whether any of the churches had succeeded in achieving anything more than to hold their own with the increasing population.

According to an independent survey made by a Congregationalist minister, William Hewgill of Farnworth, in 1885 the overall hold of religion had increased only slightly during the period since the 1851 census; at that time 40 per cent of the population had been provided with church accommodation, whilst in 1885 the figure stood at 42 per cent. (32)

Hewgill's yardstick was church sittings and he produced no evidence to show how many of these were actually occupied so that his results proved very little about the nature of attendance at religious worship⁽³³⁾; but if less than half of the population could attend church or chapel at any one time the proportion of regular worshippers could not have been very high, as may be judged from the returns of the Nonconformist and Independent surveys, published in 1881-1882 (see also Maps 5 and 7). (34)

It appears, therefore, that the direct influence of religion on Lancashire people during the later years of the nineteenth century was not very strong on account of the tendency of the greater proportion of the population to stay away from church services. Nevertheless, religion, despite its apparent weakness, must rank in importance alongside the economic and social conditions of the region as a major determinant of political attitudes. When the main areas of support among the religious denominations are compared with the distribution of party loyalties there emerges a sharp contrast between Tory and Catholic strength in the west and the Liberal - Nonconformist support in the eastern parts of the region. An analysis of this problem forms the basis of Chapter 6.

4 Economic and Social Conditions

Finally, a word or two must be said about the conditions in which the Lancashire working class lived during this period.

It will be appreciated that with a high proportion of wage earners in the region and with many towns dependent on a single trade fluctuations in trade could easily spark of widespread unemployment; the worst periods were the depressions of the mid 'eighties and 'nineties, 1903-04 and 1908-09. Before 1909 there was no state provision for old age and until 1911 no compensation for workers not covered by trade union benefits against sickness and unemployment. There was therefore no substitute among the majority of wage earners for thrift and parsimony as guarantees against hard times.

As well as economic uncertainty working people experienced a variety of living conditions. Evidence given to the Royal Commission on Labour (1891-93) gives the impression that many cotton operatives managed to rent four-roomed cottages at prices of about four shillings a week; at best these would be situated on the steep slopes of cotton villages, open to pleasant Pennine Moorland and scoured by prevailing winds and rain. At the other extreme were the courts and back-to-back houses of Oldham. In only a few places had philanthropic industrialists laid down model villages for their workers, the planned village of Port Sunlight at Bebington being a tribute to Mr. Lever's soap empire. The population boom of the nineteenth century had inevitably created a chaotic huddle of bad houses and overcrowding, particularly in the newer towns of Oldham ^{and} Widnes, and even in a planned settlement like Barrow-in-Furness housing conditions could be dreadful. (35) Manchester

and Liverpool were notorious for their mortality rates; Liverpool's was the highest for any of the large English towns of the 1880's,⁽³⁶⁾ more serious in the ancient parish than in the out-townships. The problem of housing shortage and overcrowding was exacerbated by colonies of immigrants established near the principal railway stations. Liverpool acquired a reputation as a pioneer city in housing reform when the Council began building workers' flats in the city centre and demolishing slums; but knocking down far exceeded re-building; in 1913 there were still almost three thousand people living illegally in cellar dwellings, and the percentage of its population living more than two to a room showed no marked decline between 1891 and 1931. Nonetheless in 1914 Liverpool held the doubtful honour of having a greater proportion of its population municipally housed than any other British city - 1.3 per cent.⁽³⁷⁾ Manchester City Council favoured "re-conditioning" existing houses rather than spending money on big demolition schemes; although conditions had improved since Engels' days the problem of shortage and overcrowding was not tackled sufficiently, so that by 1930's the housing problem was worse in many cases than it had been in the early years of the century.⁽³⁸⁾ T. R. Marr's report, Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford (1904), reveals the extent of slum property in the two cities and shows very clearly its static location in the districts bordering the city centre, against the peripheral development of better housing with open spaces and gardens in middle class suburbs.⁽³⁹⁾ In both Liverpool and Manchester house building fluctuated after 1900, the index being lower than the national average in 1913.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Yet such conditions were not necessarily the seedbeds of political militancy. Lancashire was not in a state of continuous social unrest and it may even be questioned whether large sections of the working class were ever really interested in questions of social reform and improvement, especially if they involved interference in peoples' lives by the state. ⁽⁴¹⁾ Rather than rebelling and trying to change society most people attempted to make the best out of their everyday existence, developing a rich variety of attitudes that formed the basis of a rather conservative social philosophy. The Lancashire landscape still today bears the marks of the working class culture that was created as people came to accept their surroundings - co-ops, commercial football and cricket, seaside holidays, brass bands, allotments: all testify to the life style of the working class at the end of the nineteenth century. ⁽⁴²⁾

5 Summary

We may now conclude by drawing together the main features of Lancashire life during our period. The region clearly derived its character from the growth of industry during the nineteenth century, the effects of which were to give to Lancashire a large working class population. Because the economy remained relatively prosperous until the first World War no real problems of unemployment arose during this period, although the inherent vulnerability of having so many workers employed in traditional, staple industries was beginning to reveal itself on occasions.

The class structure of the region provided fertile ground for the development of trade unionism, a process that could be further assisted by the large scale nature of industrial undertakings.

But whilst on the one hand conditions seemed promising for working class action in industrial and political life contradictory pressures were brought to bear through the influence of middle class leadership in some areas. Moreover, the region's immigration patterns, with their effect on religious behaviour, were a source of division within the working class.

Lancashire therefore provides a good setting in which to examine the development of independent working class politics, with all the difficulties that attended such a process.

THE COTTON UNIONS

By the middle of the nineteenth century the Lancashire cotton industry had completed its technological revolution ⁽¹⁾ and entered a fully developed factory stage. During the next 75 or so years its form, structure and methods of production changed very little. The great leap forward in cotton production had come during the 1850's ⁽²⁾ after which, because of increasing competition from abroad, the industry's growth rate slowed down. It was during this phase of deceleration, lasting roughly from the 1870's to 1914, that the workers in the spinning, weaving and cardroom sections of the industry developed and consolidated their trade union organisation and by the turn of the century these three groups of unions possessed a combined membership of some 125,000 operatives, a figure representing about 35 per cent of the total labour force in cotton textiles. ⁽³⁾ Clearly then, the cotton unions must bulk large in any discussion of working class institutions in Lancashire at this time.

In the following pages an attempt will be made to outline the industrial development of the cotton unions in order to provide the necessary context for a later discussion of their political manoeuvres. For the cotton unions adopted a rather sphinx-like attitude towards political activity; not until 1895 did they make an attempt to promote labour candidates at parliamentary elections and then their endeavours were distinctly half-hearted. It was only in 1903, when they affiliated to the Labour Representation Committee, that the cotton unions began to display a consistent political policy. Before this, it is true, the cotton workers had put pressure on Parliament from time to time to obtain reforms that would bring improvements in factory conditions, but this was essentially

an opportunist gambit that took very much a second place to industrial action. Such behaviour contrasts markedly with that of the other big group of trade unionists in Lancashire, the Miners, whose political and industrial developments proceeded pari passu. The Miners, of course, had undoubted electoral advantages - high concentration of membership in a relatively small geographical area and sufficient organisational and financial resources to sponsor parliamentary candidates - but these qualities were possessed by the cotton unions, if perhaps to a slightly lesser degree. Why, then, were the cotton workers so slow to exploit politics?

One answer may lie in the political differences that existed between individual workers, the conflict of Tory and Liberal sympathies making it difficult for the unions to embark on any political action, without arousing dissent among rank and file members. Union leaders certainly regarded this as a serious obstacle, though by the 1890's the cotton unions had cultivated a substantial loyalty that might have been expected to offset traditional sympathies in the political arena. The truth is that these loyalties were not really put to the test before 1906 and it must be assumed that the urge to do so did not exist before about the turn of the century. In any case, the Lancashire Miners experienced political conflict in the rank and file just as much as the cotton unions but it did not prevent a successful parliamentary campaign by a Miners' leader in the heart of the coalfield in 1892. There is, however, a second reason that might be advanced to explain the laggardly pace of political development in the cotton unions; this involves the very substantial industrial bargaining position achieved by the unions in the 1890's which to a great extent seemed to obviate the need for political action. If the unions could get what they wanted by industrial action there seemed little point in lobbying cabinet ministers

and sponsoring parliamentary candidates. The key to this attitude lies in the industrial history of the cotton unions, and particularly in the stage reached by them during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, so that if their industrial experiences are understood, it is possible to appreciate their political stance.

1. Spinners and Weavers: Origins, Development and Consolidation.

The early industrial experiences of the cotton workers go far to explain the modes of behaviour adopted by their unions. The essential elements in the aims of the spinners' and weavers' organisations were forged during the period of industrial change that began in the eighteenth century and lasted until the 1840's. During this time the two groups of workers experienced different fortunes and consequently adopted different tactics to control their working environment.

The most important achievement of the spinners' in their early history was the imposition of a system of machine manning and entry control in the spinning factories. The mechanisation of the spinning processes in cotton production was a comparatively gradual affair. The hand-mule spinners had known factory conditions from the beginning of the nineteenth century following the adaptation of Crompton's mule. In this context the spinner established his seniority over the other members of the spinning team, who became, in effect, his assistants. When more fully automated "self-actor" mules were introduced in the factories from the 1820's onwards the process of change was sufficiently restrained to allow the spinner to retain his control over the working group. It became usual for one spinner to supervise two mules with the help of two "piecers" who were recruited and paid by the spinner; the piecers were usually younger men though their status was not equal and the senior of the two was often an experienced factory

hand.

The effect of this strategy was to create in the spinning trade the appearance of an apprenticeship system designed to regulate the intake of labour into the spinners' ranks and to maintain comparatively high earnings for the spinners against low ones for the piecers. But since the differential between spinner and piecer was an artificial one - there was no difference between the two in skills - the spinners had to ensure that their assistants did not become a source of danger in time of strikes; if the spinners struck work the employers might in theory break the strike by dismissing all the spinners and appointing piecers in their stead. To counteract this the spinners unions had to attempt recruitment of a sufficiently high proportion of piecers to ancillary unions, dependent upon the spinners for strike pay, and ensure that when spinners were on strike piecers were also. This policy demanded constant action by spinners' unions at local level and even so there were occasional revolts by piecers against the tutelage of their supervisors; but in general the policy was successful and the piecers repressed their grievances against the day when they would themselves, in the course of time, be promoted to the senior position of spinner. (4)

Success in control of the labour supply therefore ensured the spinners' high earnings (5) and made an important contribution to the later success of their unions. On the other hand, the weavers were unable to adopt such a position; their union history was based on a more open principle. The weavers found their transformation from self-employed artisans, a status they enjoyed in the eighteenth century, to proletarian outworkers a much less favourable process. (6) Automation came to weaving with the power-loom in the 1830's, by which time the old hand-loom apprenticeship system was almost extinct; technical changes were implemented fairly quickly and threw the

workers into great confusion. (7) In addition, they came after the weavers had been suffering reduced earnings for about a generation. Trade unionism among the new power-loom weavers was therefore based on a free-entry system, with little or no attempt made to regulate labour supply, and its main preoccupation was with the establishment of standard wage rates. Where the spinners could leave wages to find their own level, the weavers had to use the union to bargain for wages with the employers.

By the end of the nineteenth century both groups of unions had perfected their methods and reaped tangible rewards. The spinners' unions reached maturity earlier, partly because of economic developments in the cotton trade which assisted their growth. Improvements in spinning techniques had increased the number of spindles to each mule so that by the 1870's it was possible to run a thousand spindles and with improved carding machines cotton was produced which spun more easily. Consequently output increased; yarn produced per man hour went up from 0.4lb in 1830 to 2.3 lb in 1892 whilst after 1860 the labour force remained constant, even showing a slight drop in the 1890's. (8)

Local separatism at first prevented the spinners' unions from taking full advantage of this situation. Although the Spinners' Amalgamation dates from 1853 no real centralised action was pursued until 1870 when levies were collected for the Amalgamation (9) and a stronger federation organised by the grouping of areas with the same wage price - lists into "provinces" centred upon Bolton and Oldham, the two main spinning towns. During the depression at the close of the 1870's the Amalgamation carried out extensive fights to avoid wage reductions spending £37,000 and borrowing from its reserve fund. (10) The result was an inability to support members and about a fifth of them were lost.

The Spinners' fortunes began to improve with the appointment in 1878 of James Mawdsley as General Secretary. Mawdsley had served for three years as assistant secretary to the Preston Spinners and was well versed in the intricate negotiation of price-lists, having been appointed following an examination of candidates in this technique. (11) His skills and vigour in carrying out the routine tasks of union management amounted to one of the most important factors in the Spinners' progress during the 1880's. Mawdsley's policy was to build up the Amalgamation's potential wealth and thereby secure its industrial strength. By exacting contributions of over a shilling a week from every member the treasury was replenished and a wide range of benefits became possible. (12)

Mawdsley was less concerned with the wages problem than were the officials of the weaving unions. Although payment by the list system was the accepted practice in the spinning trade, as in weaving, no agreed standard list was negotiated for Oldham until 1876, whilst Bolton did not have one until 1887. (13) General wage reductions during periods of bad trade were quite different, however, and Mawdsley set himself to guarantee that his members would not suffer because overstocked markets pushed down prices and caused employers to demand wage cuts. By the mid 1880's the Spinners Amalgamation was strong enough to challenge the employers on this question. The test came with the Oldham strike of 1885. Bad trade in that year had brought threatening rumours about reductions in operatives' wages (14) and the Spinners decided to make a stand against economies which they considered to be brought on by overproduction. In July the masters insisted on ten per cent cuts but the Executive Council of the Amalgamation proposed five per cent reductions with a four day week, to clear stocks. (15) In Oldham the employers took matters into their own hands and undertook to fight

a battle on behalf of the whole trade. The operatives' proposals were rejected and on July 20th a strike began that was to last for thirteen weeks; in all some 5,000 spinners were idle but their stoppage affected almost 19,000 others in dependent trades. (16)

The strike outlined the great strength of the Spinners' Amalgamation. At first this seemed false; tactics demanded a retreat and the Spinners accepted an immediate reduction of five per cent without short-time working; in addition, provisions were made for a review of trade in three months time with the possibility of another five per cent cut. (17) Yet the owners desisted from enforcing this and whilst prices remained low the Spinners resisted half-hearted attempts by the masters to enforce the extra five per cent cut in January and August 1886. (18) The strike had convinced the employers of the Spinners' solidarity and immediately afterwards steps were taken to form employers' associations. (19) Equally important was the effect of the strike on another groups of workers; it had thrown out of work thousands of piecers and cardroom hands and was directly responsible for the formation of the Cardroom Amalgamation in 1886. Repercussions were felt in the weaving districts where serious shortages of weft were experienced. (20) Thus the Oldham strike of 1885 showed that the Spinners were prepared to use their industrial strength to fight wage reductions during bad trade and if necessary disrupt the whole of the cotton industry. As a result they suffered no further cuts until 1892.

Trade unionism among the weavers took longer to develop and did not enjoy real strength quite so early. Nevertheless, their policy of achieving standard wage rates contained, in the words of Professor H. A. Turner, ".....the key to their own early consolidation." (21) In the task of establishing lists for piecework payment in the various localities the weavers' societies came to rely upon the services of skilled negotiators whose job it was to supervise

the correct payment of wages, fix adjustments to rates and calculate new lists as the range of products increased. The earliest lists, of which the Blackburn one of 1853 was the prototype, were arranged by committees of operatives, but the function soon became a full-time occupation. Thomas Birtwistle, appointed Secretary of the East Lancashire Amalgamated Power Loom Weavers' Friendly Association in 1861, (22) was the first of the full-time officials - "a combination in the trade union world of the accountant and the lawyer". (23) The objects of his Association, which may also be regarded as a statement of Birtwistle's duties, were:

"(to) keep up our present rate of wages to the standard list and to be able to resist any attempts to reduce the same and also to prevent one employer paying less than another for the same amount and quality of work and particularly to bring up the prices of those who are paying the lowest rate of wages." (24)

Here were the origins of the weavers' struggle for a Uniform List.

Birtwistle's immediate task was to negotiate piecework price lists, however, and during the following few years he arranged several in the Association's area (25); at the same time local weavers' societies began to appoint their own secretaries to deal primarily with the wages question but also to assist unpaid "collectors" and committee members in the recruitment of new members and the supervision of strike action.

But the "First Amalgamation", as Birtwistle's East Lancashire Association later became known, had serious shortcomings. It was too small and, because of its localised development, had unequal funds. Provisions for a central strike reserve fund, the weavers' real need, were inadequate. These failings were underlined by two strikes in 1878 and 1884; the first - "The Great Strike"- involved about 100,000 weavers and revealed a serious lack of union discipline and control. (26) The second, fought at Blackburn, failed to

restore wage cuts of up to ten per cent made in 1878. (27) This latter event provoked Birtwistle and some local weavers' officials, including David Holmes of the Burnley Weavers' Association, to embark upon immediate reorganisation on a wider, more centralised, basis. At a series of all - Lancashire delegate meetings at Bury and Blackburn in May 1884 a "Second Amalgamation" was established as the Northern Counties Amalgamated Associations of Weavers. (28)

In spite of its hasty formation the Amalgamation prospered during the 1880's. Its main assets were an existing structure from which to operate and a vigorous leadership. The bases of the original Amalgamation were used, though extended and given greater cohesion. The objects ^{remained} substantially the same: to "establish and maintain a uniform and fair rate ^{of} wages in proportion to the quantity of the work performed" and to "prevent unnecessary reductions and inflictions and when trade and circumstances will allow, obtain an advance in the rate of wages." (29) The secretary dealt with the specialised problem of wages besides looking after office work and communicating with local officials. At least two officials were detailed to the important task of recruiting members; from the middle 'eighties until their deaths in 1905 and 1906 Joshua Barrows and David Holmes undertook this duty. Both were veteran trade unionists; Holmes, born in Manchester in 1843, had settled at Padiham, near Burnley, in the 1850's and worked there as a handloom weaver. Though still quite a young man he had participated in union work at Burnley, experiencing victimisation by employers because of his activities. In 1872 he was elected President of Burnley Weavers' Association and was to hold the position for over thirty years. Holmes' personal success through adversity had produced in him a toughness tempered with a desire to see trade unionism grow in strength by the application of respectable methods. (30) His colleague, Barrows, was also from Padiham where

he had worked as a weaver for many years before he became active in union affairs. Barrows quickly then made a name for himself as a forceful advocate of union reorganisation throughout Lancashire and his work in establishing the Second Amalgamation was justly rewarded by his appointment as the first official Agent of the new body. (31)

During the late 'eighties the Weavers fought a series of strike actions to enforce standard wage lists against employers' attempts at under payment. At this time the number of looms in the weaving trade was expanding at a rapid rate, but output was increasing at a slower pace than that of the labour force and naturally the employers tried to reduce costs by increasing the number of looms supervised by each weaver. The amalgamation was fairly successful, however, in opposing this trend and limiting the loom ratio to four to one (32) thus helping to distribute the work load more evenly and stave off unemployment. But the effect of this policy was to maintain a large pool of workers in employment and the Weavers Amalgamation had to be very careful that no districts suffered under payment. Hence the idea of a Uniform List from which all weavers' wages could be negotiated. To some extent, most employers were prepared to accept such a list, which would prevent under cutting by individual firms, (33) but agreement on details was slow to materialise between the employers and the union. In 1885 the Amalgamation fought a two week strike at Burnley where the masters were abusing the Blackburn List; between 1886 and 1888 two massive strikes were ordered at Ashton-under-Lyne and Barnoldswick to demonstrate the Weavers' position on under payment. Even so, a Uniform List for plain cloths was not agreed upon until June 1892. On the whole, all weaving districts gained from the new arrangements (34) and Amalgamation membership rapidly increased during the next few years. New branches were formed and by the time of the First World War the Amalgamation was supported in all towns where weaving was

carried out. (35)

By the early 1890's, therefore, the Spinners' and Weavers' Amalgamations had made considerable progress by their efforts in industrial action and were able to use their power to a significant degree in effecting decisions in the management of the cotton industry, as we shall see. It would be wrong to suggest that at this time the two groups of unions faced no major problems; there were still many areas of the cotton workers' industrial environment needing attention, but it seemed reasonable to assume that such problems as there were could successfully be tackled by industrial action.

2 The Cardroom Amalgamation and the Brooklands Agreement

The third major group of cotton workers, those employed in the card and blowing rooms of spinning factories, only began to exploit collective action by the mid 1880's. But their development was quick and by about 1891 the new Cardroom Amalgamation was fairly well established, its presence helping to weld the cotton unions into a strong federation during the last few years of the century.

Cardroom workers were engaged in the preparatory stages of yarn spinning and although their work was a long established feature of factory production it was of a lowly nature, without the craft ancestry which the spinners and weavers might in theory claim; this is borne out by the fact that unlike most workers in the cotton trade the cardroom operatives were designated by the location of their work rather than by the function of their job. They were also very much dependent on the actions of the highly organised spinners; a widespread spinning strike, as at Oldham in 1885, forced idleness, willy nilly, upon the cardroom hands. Moreover, cardroom operatives were paid by time, not by piece, and were therefore ill-equipped to take advantage of the speeded up machinery that helped to increase the piecework yield. Their

unorganised condition also left them vulnerable to any economies wrought by the employers, especially those resulting in "doubling up", involving an intensification of the burdens placed on the worker. (36)

The cardroom operatives, then, had a poor union record, except at Oldham, where a federation of local societies with a longish history had held rather tenuously together. The need to extend and strengthen this coverage was obvious and was constantly urged in the early 1880's by a Blackburn worker named Richard Cocking. But it was the Oldham strike that really provided the impetus for action and on a wave of discontent in the cardrooms, reaching a crest in April 1886, an Amalgamation was formed. (38) The body was in most respects simply an extension of the Oldham union and was controlled from the outset by Oldham officials. It was based on the open union principle of the Weavers' Amalgamation and similarly attempted to recruit its members from both men and women operatives. Its original aims were:

"to afford pecuniary assistance to any member who may be victimised or without employment in consequence of a dispute or lock-out, or when permanently disabled by accident, and to provide a fund for a decent interment of its members at death." (39)

It seems fairly clear, however, that this was far too ambitious a scheme. Levies were only two pence a month, less than the Weavers' Amalgamation which attempted to provide only strike pay. William Mullin, the Amalgamation's secretary, was convinced from the beginning that the cardroom workers should pursue a policy similar to that of the Weavers in order to build up a fighting strength. In his own words:

"We should prepare ourselves for a strike. The present is the most opportune time we can ever hope for to both increase our membership and our funds so that when times of adversity come we shall be in a position to meet all demands." (40)

The history of the Cardroom Amalgamation during the next few years showed that Mullin's ideas were fully justified but it took much cajoling to

rouse local societies from their inertia. Mullin continued to express his fears of a "gigantic society of weakness" ⁽⁴¹⁾, despairing that the prime object of protecting wages during bad trade would be achieved. ⁽⁴²⁾ The Cotton Factory Times, which had done much to encourage trade unionism in the cardrooms, even referred to the unwillingness of some workers to remit adequate subscriptions - expecting their officials to "make bricks without straw." ⁽⁴³⁾

This attitude can partly be explained by the exceptionally easy growth of the Amalgamation during the improved trade of the late 'eighties, making it difficult to enforce self-discipline on members. Wage advances were secured in May 1888 and January 1891, by which time the membership of the Amalgamation had soared to over 28,000. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ But when trade began to deteriorate at the end of 1891 the Cardroom Amalgamation was forced to look to the Spinners for support against the possibility of wage reductions. After local attempts to secure an alliance ⁽⁴⁵⁾ the Cotton Workers' Association was formed in that year to assist both groups of workers in the event of a strike. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ It was designed to achieve total stoppages in spinning mills and gave the cardroom hands an assurance that sympathetic action on their part in support of the spinners would be paid for out of a common strike treasury. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ This arrangement, of course, benefited the Spinners' Amalgamation and particularly fulfilled the aims of James Mawdsley, who had long been advocating co-operation of this nature in the spinning trade. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

Yet the scheme came too late to help the Cardroom Amalgamation, for in 1892 the spinning trade became involved in a major lock-out that grew out of a dispute at Stalybridge over "bad spinning" - when speeded up machines and inferior quality cotton caused threads to snap, hence slowing up the production process and reducing the operatives' hourly output, upon which their wages depended. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ The Stalybridge dispute was hardly over when

another followed, provoked this time by employers' demands for wage reductions because of the poor state of trade. The unions proposed remedial action in the form of short-time working, to clear the overstocked market and stimulate demand for yarns once more; this approach was rejected by the employers, who were adamant on the cutting of wages. (50) Eventually, on November 5th 1892, a lock-out began in south east Lancashire which lasted for twenty weeks putting around 50,000 workers and 16,000,000 spindles out of operation; a "large though indefinable" (51) quantity of weaving machinery was also stopped and partial idleness caused in the bleaching, dyeing and other finishing trades. The Cardroom Amalgamation supported the Spinners and some 24,000 cardroom operatives were locked out. (52) None of them ^{were} assisted from the funds of the Cotton Workers' Association, which had not yet had time to accumulate, and Mullin had to appeal in the trade union press for donations from sympathisers; though he met with a little success the overall response was insufficient. (53)

The conclusion of the lock-out was embodied in the Brooklands Agreement of March 1893. (54) The operatives agreed to submit to a reduction of sevenpence in the pound on their earnings but in return secured a planned wages programme for the future. There was to be a twelve months moratorium on wage adjustments and after that time they were to be limited to the sevenpence standard either way. Local committees were to be set up to settle individual disputes, especially those concerning "bad spinning" which required to be concluded speedily. For the Cardroom Amalgamation an important exemption was made to the general terms of the Agreement allowing male cardroom operatives to negotiate for whatever wage rises they could obtain by free market bargaining. (55)

The Brooklands Agreement, and the lock-out that had brought it about,

served to underline the extent of cotton union development by the early 1890's. In the first place it re-emphasised the massive strength of the Spinners' Amalgamation; after what was by any standards an exhausting stoppage the Spinners were able to recoup their losses so quickly that by 1895 their central treasury held over £150,000 and Mawdsley could with justification claim them to be "the wealthiest trade union in the world." (56) In fact his verdict was supported by the Webbs who, writing shortly afterwards in their Industrial Democracy, spoke of the Spinners as "one of the strongest, most efficient and most successful of trade unions"; they added,

"in good years and bad alike (the Amalgamation) has for a whole generation maintained the net earnings of its members at the relatively high level of from 35 to 50 shillings a week." (57)

By comparison Brooklands was something of a Janus face for the Cardroom Amalgamation. Up to a point the union gained, its status greatly elevated by its association with the Spinners. In reality, however, the lock-out created havoc within the union, with funds exhausted and a fifth of the membership lost. For the next ten years the Cardroom Amalgamation struggled to maintain a hardcore of members as subscriptions were raised to restore liquidity, (a move that caused a slight falling away of members in the Spinners also), (58) and for the remainder of the 1890's union membership became something of a luxury for the comparatively poorly paid cardroom hands. To be sure, a more rational position on benefits resulted from the lock-out, for in July 1893 the costly death benefit was abolished (59), yet it took a decade for the union fully to recover its position of 1891.

In general, however, Brooklands vindicated the cotton unions' policy, confirming the value of their industrial activity over the years. It brought a settled wage policy that helped to banish the effects of trade fluctuation on workers' standards of living. A contemporary observer, Elijah Helm, whose sympathies in the lock-out were with the employers, noted regretfully that the

unions had introduced a new principle into labour relations: that "whilst wages may be advanced in times of prosperity they ought never to be reduced." (60) This was the climax to the steady development of union power; Brooklands represented the highest point of their industrial consolidation. Moreover, by securing such an agreement the unions were seeking power with responsibility in the cotton industry and there is good reason to regard Brooklands not merely as a step towards the greater security of the cotton workers but as a seal on the unions' position as equal partners, with the employers, in the guardianship of the industry.

4. "A Union of All the Producers....."

By the 1890's there were obvious reasons for wanting to preserve the buoyancy of the Lancashire cotton trade. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the industry had begun to lose its dynamism; it was no longer expanding as it had done in the 1850's and 1860's, and though the magnitude of its production was still a contemporary wonder (61) the important markets of Europe and America were quickly slipping away, to be lost forever by 1900. Lancashire came to rely on exports to India and, to a lesser extent, China. At the same time competition in the output of cotton goods from America and continental Europe reduced Lancashire's shares in world markets. (62) Technological improvements were also passing to foreigners; for example, the self-actor mule and the Lancashire loom were still used extensively, almost exclusively, in Lancashire mills at the turn of the century whilst the machinery of the future, the ring-frame and the Northrop loom, were being adopted by competitors. (63)

The response of the cotton unions to this situation was to co-operate as far as possible with the employers to regulate the industry for the benefit of the half million people whose jobs it provided. The balance of power

between unions and employers permitted such a policy and, more so than in any other industry during this period, there was displayed in the Lancashire cotton trade a unity of purpose aimed at maximum harmony in industrial relations.

By the late 1880's all three major cotton unions were beginning to extend their activities to guard against disruptions in the industry that might threaten wages and ultimately jobs. Three examples serve to illustrate this trend.

In the first place there was the attack on middlemen. The union leadership despised the position in the trade of the brokers and merchants; according to James Mawdsley,

"so long as employers allowed themselves to be robbed by brokers and middlemen the operatives ought never to submit to a reduction of wages however small the profits of employers were." (64)

Mawdsley was clearly conscious of the disproportionate rewards accruing to these "middlemen" and the attitude of the unions was summed up by the Cotton Factory Times when criticising those people who,

"for doing nothing at all but handling the goods the merchants, brokers, wholesale dealers and agents generally get as much as the operatives who produce the goods, and many times over the amount which goes to the employers". (65)

In 1889 an opportunity arose for Mawdsley and other union leaders to act in concert with the employers against a group of Liverpool and New York merchants who were conspiring to corner raw cotton and force up prices.

By common consent of union and management some spinning mills were put on short time working and the "ring" was quickly broken, an achievement that brought a jubilant editorial from the Cotton Factory Times and an expressed wish to see, in the future,

"the whole of the cotton industry managed on strictly scientific lines with a view to paying good wages to the hands and giving a satisfactory return to the owners of the mills." (66)

The incident had been successful in part, though of course it did not eliminate the influence of the merchant who continued to take his cut from the profits of the trade. Yet its greater significance lies in the mutuality of interest that was beginning to develop between unions and employers.

A few years later a more striking example of this relationship was to be seen over the Bimetallist question. As Lancashire began to rely more heavily on the eastern markets of India and China the cotton trade began to press more vigorously for a revision of the world's monetary system in order to stabilise trade between east and west. In the 1870's silver, the currency of the east, had in effect been demonetised and its value in relation to gold has slumped drastically, causing traders in India and the east to look to some form of manipulation as a means of restoring silver's value. This current of opinion was expressed during the 1890's by a volatile pressure group known as the Bimetallist League, whose object was to:

"promote an International Monetary Union of the leading Commercial Nations whereby silver shall be re-monetized and gold and silver monies made available.....for all purposes of international money and international trade." (67)

To be sure, many people at the time associated depressions in trade with monetary causes and in Lancashire there was a widespread belief that the bimetallic theory offered strength to the cotton industry; in fact, to judge from the cry of a correspondent in the Cotton Factory Times there was not a moment to lose:

".....are we to speak out and demand that a thorough inquiry into the matter in all its bearings be made before it is too late, that is before our merchants are bankrupt and our operatives starving?" (68)

During the bad trade of the mid 'nineties the Bimetallic League received constant financial support from Lancashire millowners and the cotton unions, whose leaders called for joint conferences of the world's chief commercial

nations as a prelude to establishing a fixed ratio of value between gold and silver. Several delegations of owners and union representatives visited Whitehall; for example, in 1892, when bimetallist agitation in Lancashire was at its height, led by the Cotton Factory Times, Mawdsley told the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, G. J. Goschen, that he considered the bimetallist question would "have no little weight in deciding the verdict of the County Palatine" in the parliamentary elections of that year. (69) For a time it did appear that Goschen might come up with an answer (70) but ultimately he proved immovable. The failure to sway the Conservatives was crucial because the Liberal party, champions of laissez-faire, refused to entertain the idea of financial manipulation and as the years passed the bimetallist issue lost much of its appeal in the face of hostile governments. Yet the cause still lingered among working class groups in Lancashire; as late as 1899 the Trade Union Monetary Reform Association could attract working men of almost all shades of political opinion (71) even though in the labour movement as a whole bimetallism had no support. (72)

A further example might be cited, moreover, to illustrate the keen sensitivity of unions and employers to the fortunes of the eastern market and their willingness to act together to protect the cotton trade. Quick as it might be to suggest the manipulation of a laissez-faire economy in its own interests, the cotton industry was equally speedy when it came to attacking protectionist measures that operated in favour of its rivals. An instance of this had been seen in the 1860's when the Manchester Chamber of Commerce had led an agitation against Canning's Indian Cotton Tariffs. (73) In 1893 a very similar situation arose once more. Faced with a large financial deficit the Indian Government had imposed a 5 per cent duty on all goods going into India, including cotton manufactures; the Secretary of State for India, however, had ordered an exemption for English cotton goods

but when H. H. Fowler took over the India Office in 1894 he reviewed the order and in the following year consented to the inclusion of manufactured cotton goods in the Indian tariff system. At the same time, in order to mollify feeling at home, Fowler proposed a 5 per cent "countervailing" duty on fine yarns spun in Indian mills. Yet after six months of this excise duty, designed to avoid total protection for Indian manufacturers, Lancashire was convinced of its failure. The Cotton Factory Times complained:

"The Indian producer pays the tax on the value of his yarn although it may subsequently be made into cloth, whilst we have to pay the tax on the cloth we send them as cloth and on its full face value as such." (74)

The upshot was that there developed in Lancashire during 1895 a vigorous agitation against the Indian duties and in the House of Commons Conservative members for Lancashire constituencies attacked Fowler in debate, though on the crucial occasion the Secretary of State was defended by his own party's Lancashire members. (75) The duties were carried on and it did not take long for the cotton trade to adjust to them, though at the time of the Commons debates few Lancashire workers, faced with bad trade and short time working, had kind words for the Liberal party. William Mullin noted with particular distaste the behaviour of Liberal M.Ps who "with a few honourable exceptions..... voted party as against the interests of so large and important an industry." (76) It was not surprising that the Liberals made such a poor showing in the cotton towns during the General Election that year.

These episodes, then, help to clarify the outlook of the cotton unions in the 1890's. That there was a "cotton interest", which to a certain extent transcended class and party boundaries was undeniable and it is possible to agree with Beatrice Webb on the existence in the cotton trade of "a union of all the producers in one trade against the outside world." (77)

The cotton union leadership had, in fact, become more interested in compromise with the employers than in conflict, an attitude that contrasted markedly with the miners' leaders' position at the same period. The cotton union standpoint was well summed up by W. H. Wilkinson, secretary of the Weavers' Amalgamation answering a question before the Royal Commission on Labour in 1892:

"And you think that a complete union of all employers and a complete union of employed brings about the best understanding and promotes uniformity of wages?"
 "Yes, I believe we could get on very well if that were so." (78)

3 Summary

At the time of ^{the} Brooklands Agreement there seemed little prospect of any major political action through the cotton unions in the immediate future. The industrial policy they had pursued brought great rewards and, what is more, it was not a policy that provoked the sort of conflict between employers and men which was likely to spill over into the radical brand of politics common in the mining districts. This is not to say that the policy of harmonious relations was a product of weak-willed, non-militant leadership; on the contrary, harmony developed because the cotton unions had proclaimed their militancy during the 1880's and shown that they were quite prepared to exploit their strength to acquire a voice in the management of the cotton trade. It was therefore a harmony derived from strength and mutual respect, ^{not} from weakness. It is true, however, that because of this policy there had grown up in the minds of cotton union leaders a feeling that industrial action was greatly superior to political action, that there was no substitute for strong trade unionism and industrial bargaining. David Holmes,

for example, the Weavers' leader, was in no doubt as to which was the better course to adopt and he was fond of pointing out that continental workers subscribed to "socialist" methods (by which he meant politics) to attain their industrial ends and that as a result their unions were in a "pitiable" condition. (79) It would seem undeniable that attitudes such as that expressed by Holmes did detract from thinking about political action, but the important thing to remember for the future is that the cotton unions were not afraid to use their strength to safeguard their interests; because of this it would be misleading to suggest that by 1893 the cotton unions had fixed a course from which they would never deviate.

Nonetheless, at the time, their outlook had seemingly depressing implications for other working class leaders. Not only was the cotton unions' own political development retarded by their industrial success but it also seemed clear that the future of working class politics in Lancashire looked bleak without cotton union support. The conversion of the cotton unions to political action at this stage would have been a significant breakthrough; the sheer size of their membership (80), matched in absolute terms only by the unions in the shipbuilding and engineering, mining and building industries (81), meant that almost one in every three of Lancashire trade unionists was left out of politics through his union by the isolation of the cotton workers. (82) The extent of unionisation in the cotton trade, running at over ninety per cent in spinning and around half in the cardroom and weaving sections (83), coupled with the geographical concentration of the membership, meant that the cotton unions were in almost as commanding a position as some county mining associations should they wish to mobilise the vote in Lancashire cotton constituencies. (84) The waste of this potential

power constituted a disappointing gap in the region's independent working class movement.

Yet the outlook was not entirely bleak. Even at the height of union power during the time of the Brooklands Agreement the situation was beginning to change. The fact is that a legislative programme was coming to be accepted by the union leadership and its significance in union business was immensely greater by the mid-'nineties than it had been ten years before. There was no guarantee that the security of the unions would continue to be defensible simply by trade union methods nor that the need to pursue a more coherent legislative programme would not disturb harmonious relations with the employers. Thus we shall see in Chapter 8 the significance of a slowly evolving political programme. Another important factor coming to bear upon the development of union policy by the middle of the 1890's was the challenge to the union leadership by local societies where socialist influence was strong. Not all the rank and file membership accepted unquestioningly official policy and, as we shall see, the Eight Hour Day issue was largely an example of a policy developing from the districts to challenge central orthodoxy. There was also the likelihood that established leaders would sooner or later have to relinquish their primacy because of increasing age and that an infusion of new blood at the top might bring a change of policy. All these factors were capable of changing the cotton unions' stance by the turn of the century.

3 THE MINERS

The development of trade unionism in the Lancashire mining industry presents an interesting comparison with that of the cotton industry. At first glance, the history of both groups of unions appears to follow a parallel course; both had their origins in the middle years of the nineteenth century and struggled to achieve industrial strength by the 1890's; both secured, at this time, impressive wage agreements by collective bargaining; both became affiliated to the Labour Representation Committee in the same year - 1903. But these resemblances are superficial and serve to distort the true picture; the fact is that, on important points, the development of the miners' union and the cotton unions differed fundamentally. For one thing, the miners did not experience a steady, cumulative growth in industrial strength; during the 1880's the unions in the coal trade were very weak, only succeeding in establishing real strength as a result of a period of good trade and high coal prices which lasted from about 1888 until 1892. In addition, the relations between the coal owners and the miners remained bitter, even at the height of union power, and there was never any sign from the miners of the managerial philosophy that characterised the cotton unions and helped to promote harmony in that trade. A further point of divergence was the manner in which the miners rose to prominence. This was done by co-operation with unions in other coalfields, for from the early 1880's the Lancashire miners were always striving to achieve their victories on a wide front, fighting to secure their position in Lancashire by

helping the miners' movement to reach its objectives nationally.

Because of all these considerations, then, the Lancashire miners attained maturity by a noticeably different process from that of the cotton unions, the most important effect of this lying in the shaping of political attitudes among the miners. From an early stage in their development political weapons became a crucial part of their armoury, brought into action when their industrial strength was too weak to sustain the fight against the employers by trade union strategy.

There was always a marked ^{legislative} undercurrent in the miners' methods and Parliament bulked considerably larger in their outlook than it did in that of the cotton workers. Moreover, when the miners' national network had been cemented by the establishment of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain in 1889 the Lancashire miners moved into the forefront of a political movement for an Eight Hours Day in the coal trade which necessitated parliamentary candidates from the miners' ranks in Lancashire, as well as in other coalfields.

Compared with the other county unions Lancashire's success in the movement was not striking, largely because the traditional party loyalties which divided the colliers' sympathies held back political progress, but when compared with the cotton workers the miners of Lancashire had gone far by the mid 'nineties towards the creation of an independent tradition in working class politics.

This, then, is the general picture of the Lancashire miners' development, determined as it was by a variety of factors stemming mainly from the conditions of the coalfield in which they worked; it is to an examination of the coalfield and the way in which it influenced trade union development that we must now turn.

1 General Considerations: the Lancashire Coalfield

The Lancashire coalfield covered most of the industrial part of the region; it was roughly triangular in shape with its apex at Colne in the north east and its base running in an arc between Manchester and St Helens; there was also a narrow salient which stretched out along the edge of the Pennines from the Manchester district to North Staffordshire. The whole area was some 500 square miles in extent. Coal measures were accessible over almost the entire coalfield but because of transport facilities and industrial demand coal workings had come to be centred on four principal localities by the late nineteenth century: Wigan - St. Helens, Bolton - Worsley, Manchester - Oldham and Burnley. The most striking feature of coalmining in these areas was the difficulty experienced in getting the coal; miners had to overcome the severe problems posed by the geological nature of the land - faulting, flooding and steep inclines, to which should be added the hazards of subsidence where workings were located under heavily urbanised areas. The physical hardship in the miner's working day began to loom longer as time passed and the more accessible seams became exhausted, so that mines were dug deeper and galleries extended further from the pit shaft. (1) The collier's time underground was thus lengthened because of the distances involved in travelling to the coalfaces whilst his shift was often interrupted by the need to make time - consuming repairs and carry out maintenance work, for which he was not paid. Hence the miner's output suffered and his earnings were reduced. (2) For the owners, also, the situation was fraught with difficulty; Lancashire presented a striking illustration of diminishing returns for coalowners, with

output remaining almost static from the 1880's onwards whilst the labour force increased. (3) In the effort to supply neighbouring manufacturing industries with cheap coal there seemed little alternative but to keep down to a minimum the biggest item in output costs - wages. (4) Moreover, because of the slight profit margins involved in the trade, the colliery owners were unwilling to make concessions to their employees in the form of free coal, or even free explosives, whilst facilities supplied by the colliery companies for the mining villages, such as schools and libraries, frequently found in more affluent coalfields in the Midlands were very rare in Lancashire. (5) With the interests of the employers and the men so sharply contrasted, therefore, it is hardly surprising that the Lancashire coalfield was not marked by harmonious industrial relations.

The physical nature of the coalfield was not the only source of conflict. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the face of industry in the mining districts was changing, as smaller colliery companies gave way to bigger combines. Perhaps the effects of this trend should not be over estimated, since it was less, perceptible in Lancashire than it appears to have been in other coalfields (6); yet there can be no doubt that by the end of the century the region's mining industry was becoming increasingly dominated by the monolithic Wigan Coal and Iron Company, by far the biggest employer of labour with over 30 collieries, and to a lesser extent by the influential Richard Evans company of St Helens. There were still ample small firms (7) though their influence tended to be overshadowed in the counsels of coalowners by the voice of the

combines. It is, of course, difficult to assess exactly how much the move towards monopoly capital influenced miners' attitudes, though it may well be suggested that the more impersonal nature of industrial relations that resulted when older mineowners, who had been in close touch with their men, were replaced by managers of combines brought about a less understanding and more conflict-ridden relationship.

Acrimonious relations might have been avoided had it not been for another factor: the formidable obstacles to union development presented by the difficulties and general nature of mining in the region. To begin with, mining was not the most important industry in Lancashire ⁽⁸⁾ and there were relatively few communities that could be termed 'pit villages' because of their total reliance on coal. ⁽⁹⁾ Most Lancashire colliers lived in towns with mixed economies such as St Helens, Oldham and Burnley. In this kind of setting the pit culture which marked the mining villages in other coalfields, derived from social and occupational homogeneity, had little chance of developing to any significant degree and in consequence there was lacking that social base upon which strong trade unionism could easily be constructed. It is also worth noting that in Lancashire there was none of the religious uniformity found among other groups of miners who generally had common ties through loyalty to the chapel; ⁽¹⁰⁾ in the Lancashire coalfield the miners were ^{as} divided in their religious opinions as they were in their political sympathies, for not only was there a keen Church and Chapel struggle but also a sizeable proportion of people supporting the Catholic Church.

With these diverse social pressures, then, certain disruptive influences appeared to assume a more significant barrier to

collective trade union action than otherwise might have been the case; for instance, the hierarchical work structure among miners, fairly common in any coalfield, which set hewers, underground day wage hands and surface workers strictly apart in a recognised order of merit ⁽¹¹⁾ was likely to have had a divisive effect on trade union development. Another feature of disharmony may well have been Irish immigration, especially high in the Wigan and St Helens districts, although admittedly tailing off towards the end of the century. But in the earlier periods it would have probably created hostility between immigrant and indigenous workers, whose customary routine might have been upset by newcomers eager to secure jobs by working hard and temporarily increasing output. ⁽¹²⁾ On balance therefore, it would appear that the common bonds among miners, fostered by such factors as social cohesion, a sense of exploitation, suspicion of authority and a unifying religion, were countered in Lancashire by equally powerful divisions. Whilst there was an obvious need for strong trade unionism to overcome the adverse economic situation in the coalfield and secure decent wages, the social bases for organisation were most unfavourable. It took time to nurture loyalty to the trade union and it was not until the 1890's that the Lancashire miners were able to meet the employers on anything like equal terms.

2 Development of the Lancashire Miners' Federation

The difficulties of union organisation among the Lancashire miners are illustrated by the fortunes of the mining unions, from their beginnings in the early 1860's to the last decade of the century. During this period the basic consideration of the miners was that of

the wages problem; the issue involved the securing of sufficient strength in order to confront the employers and negotiate a settled wages policy. This aim had been established during the 1860's when several local mining societies in Lancashire had joined an organisation known as the Amalgamated Association of Miners, set up in 1869 by a Lancashire miner called Thomas Halliday. Halliday's object was to bring together those areas in the country where trade unionism was too weak to allow of independent industrial action and by unity create an amalgamation strong enough to bargain for better wages. Thus the two principal characteristics that were to dominate Lancashire mining trade unionism during the next generation were formed - wages and national solidarity. However, during the bad trade of the 1870's Halliday's organisation collapsed, having failed to establish any permanent collective bargaining machinery. The only national movement that survived during these years was the Miners' National Union, an association that had been created in 1863 by the Scottish miner Alexander MacDonald. MacDonald's union combined the stronger county associations, particularly Northumberland and Durham, whose primary interests were not in wages but rather in pressing for legislative reforms in the coal industry. In the 1870's the members of the Miners' National Union had perfected their own system for regulating wages - the 'sliding scales' which assessed wages, after consultation between employers and union, according to the selling price of coal. This device suited very well exporting coalfields such as Northumberland and Durham where coal prices fluctuated far more than in home producing areas like Lancashire; on the other hand it offered little to Lancashire miners, whose main

interest lay in establishing a wage level that would support a collier's family adequately. Thus, although some local societies in Lancashire did affiliate to the Miners' National Union, there was never much sympathy in the region for the methods of the north eastern miners, and during the 1870's Lancashire stood still so far as any progress on the wages question was concerned. (13)

The breakthrough was not to come until the late 1880's and meanwhile much of the credit in Lancashire mining unionism was built up as a result of the work of one man. After the collapse of the Amalgamated Miners Halliday's schemes were taken up and exploited by Thomas Ashton. Ashton, born at Openshaw, near Manchester, in 1844 was fairly typical of the generation of union leaders who became prominent in the 1880's. Born in a collier's family and bred in the pitman's life, Ashton was self-educated, singled out for vigour and intelligence to become a checkweigher, dismissed for organising a union at Bradford in Manchester, forced into unemployment and eventually established as the Secretary of Ashton under Lyne Miners' Association in 1879. Thomas Ashton was no demagogue, rarely seeking the limelight with explosive oratory; his value lay in planning trade union strategy, as was revealed by a county secretary in later years: "his letters to us", it was recalled, "were like the directives issued by a general in a campaign."

Thomas Ashton's strategy for the Lancashire miners involved the creation of an alliance between all the unions in the home producing central coalfields in order to set up a wage system more congenial to the miners than the sliding scales. Ashton's first opportunity to put his scheme to the test came in 1880 when some local unions

had decided to strike for an advance of 15 per cent from owners in Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, North Wales and Lancashire.

As it happened only the Lancashire miners came out, some fifty thousand of them, only to find to their dismay that coal was being supplied to Lancashire cotton mills from the very districts whose support they had expected. (15) Ashton seized the chance of calling together several Lancashire societies after the strike and in April 1881 was able to form the Lancashire Miners' Federation, a loosely centralised body which he hoped to mould into an effective wage bargaining instrument. (16)

Ashton continued to urge inter county liaison to bolster up his own weakness in Lancashire. His most likely source of support seemed to be in Yorkshire, where the men's leaders, Ben Pickard and Ned Cowey, had persuaded the union to reject a sliding scale in 1881. Ashton maintained informal contact with the Yorkshiremen and in 1882 attended the conference of the Yorkshire Miners' Association to offer Pickard the support of the Lancashire Federation. (17) Following the disastrous strike of 1880 Lancashire had achieved two sets of advances - mainly because of improved trade - (18) and Ashton saw the opportunity of creating from this a completely new wage system. The results was a Special Conference of miners' representatives from the central coalfield unions, called by Ashton and Pickard, in October 1882. (19)

The wage structure sought by Ashton differed fundamentally from that embodied in the sliding scale system. Whereas the sliding scale represented mainly the exporting coalfield's fears about the fluctuation of the export market and provided a suitable means of

adjusting wages to coal prices, (20) it was felt in the home producing districts, whose market was more stable, that co-operation with the employers to such an extent was impossible and that the unions must press for a living wage from a position of strength. In any case, wages in Lancashire, as in many other districts, were too low to allow of a sliding scale; several districts in Lancashire had in fact adopted them faute de mieux in the late 'seventies but all were terminated between 1883 and 1885 as soon as wage advances had been felt. (21)

In Yorkshire the scales were rejected when they led to wage cuts. Thomas Ashton admitted that "neither men nor leaders in Lancashire have ever been strongly in favour of a sliding scale" (22) whilst W.E. Harvey of the Derbyshire Miners claimed in 1889 that there was "no bottom in them" (23); it was frequently said by miners that employers made long contracts in the summer, when coal prices were low, in order to keep down wage averages. (24) In short, it was a stable wage the miners demanded, not a fluctuating one, and Ashton was determined from the early 1880's to achieve union solidarity as the first step in the implementation of his wages policy.

It was first tested in early 1883 when owners in North Staffordshire demanded reductions. The district had become affiliated to the Lancashire Federation in November 1882 with 1,850 members (25) so that Ashton was able to take responsibility for organising the battle. He urged Lancashire colliers to support their colleagues or face wage reductions and a strike in their own pits. The men responded and levied sufficient contributions to give North Staffordshire a weekly strike pay of ten shillings for each miner for five months. (26) But the strike gained nothing whilst wage

advances of the previous year began to be "nibbled" away by the Lancashire coal companies. The subsequent general attack on wages broke Ashton's intended federation of county unions but at the same time served to underline the pressing need for such an organisation.

At their annual conference in 1883 the Lancashire miners resolved to be "in favour of a national organisation being established that would consider all matters relating to trade and wages questions and legislation both legally and politically." (27) But there was no response from other county associations at the time and Ashton made one more attempt to maintain inter-county collaboration. During the hot summer of 1884 coal prices in Lancashire dropped (28) and employers followed "nibbling" cuts at local pits by demanding a general wage reduction of ten per cent. Ashton called a national conference in the hope of planning joint defensive action; he was ordered by a meeting of the Lancashire Federation to telegraph immediately to Pickard about a conference and received the directive that "if he (Pickard) delays to call the conference, we hereby instruct our secretary to call such a conference himself." (29) Goodwill was preserved; the conference met but Ashton received a shock. When plans were laid to fight the reduction by strikes at two groups of collieries in Lancashire the local men involved refused to co-operate and resistance collapsed. This was a severe blow to Ashton's design and it was hardly surprising that the prestige of the Lancashire Miners' Federation fell sharply. In seven weeks membership slumped from over 16,000 to 11,500. (30)

Ashton's scheme for an alliance within the central coalfields

had aimed at building local strength through corporate action. The reverse had taken place and during adverse periods local separation had become evident. Union development in Lancashire, so dependent on success in wage bargaining, therefore received a setback in 1884 with the failure of Ashton's policy.

There followed a stagnant period in the mid 'eighties as wage negotiations made little progress. A ten per cent reduction had been enforced by the employers in 1884 and later that year preparations were made to arrange another sliding scale, a sure sign of failure on the part of the Federation. During the next two years, however, employers and union representatives failed to arrive at any arrangement on what should constitute a "fair and equitable basis" for a scale and talks eventually broke down when the employers refused to entertain as a basis the 1886 wages level. ⁽³¹⁾ The wages question in the coalfield had, by this time, become more than a mere collection of figures and scales; for one thing, colliers' earnings could be seen to be generally lower than those of other groups of workmen ⁽³²⁾ and many colliers were undoubtedly having difficulty in making ends meet. As Thomas Aspinwall of the Wigan Miners' Association pointed out to a joint meeting of coalowners and miners' delegates in 1887, wages in Lancashire were at an irreducible minimum. "Poverty", he asserted,

"is rampant in the families of your workmen. It is perhaps greater now than it has been during any other period in my experience....I think there will be no exception taken to the statement I am now about to make, that is, that wages vary at present from ten to eighteen shillings per week, and when you deduct from these sums house rent and fire, and school fees what a miserable pittance remains upon which our average family of four can exist." ⁽³³⁾

Shortly before this meeting the Lancashire Miners Federation had decided to ask for a wage rise of ten per cent, arguing that earnings, especially in the west of the coalfield, were "considerably too low" and resolving "that no reduction in wages whatever be submitted to at the present time." (34) But another factor entered into the question at this point - was the Miners' Federation strong enough to carry through its resolution? Since the establishment of the union in 1881 organisation had been very fluid; the local miners' societies retained a good deal of influence and although on occasions the miners had acted in concert union membership had been too low to support any strike on a large scale. Most major decisions affecting the men's position were taken at "Pit Set" conferences, at which non-unionists attended on equal terms with society men. This was necessary in order to achieve solidarity, since the federation could not afford to alienate the thirty thousand or more (35) who had not joined the organisation. During a stoppage the non-unionists were a potential strike breaking ^{force} and it was therefore Federation policy to pay non-unionists a strike levy in order to secure their support. But in practice it was not the union but the hewers, hierarchy that controlled miners' meetings/whether unionists or not; branches were allowed one vote at Pit Set conferences for every 500 underground workers. (36) Surface workers were ignored and day-wage hands were usually strongly influenced by the hewers. Union influence was further weakened by the structure of the branches, based on a series of lodges, themselves the creation of a group of pits. (37) Membership in 1882 was said to be over 13,000 following the North Staffordshire affiliation, but in 1885-86 both St. Helens and North Staffordshire

left the Federation ⁽³⁸⁾ and the membership at this time represented only a small proportion of the region's mineworkers. ⁽³⁹⁾ Ashton himself admitted in 1886 that the organisation was in a "deplorable condition". ⁽⁴⁰⁾ There was too much district autonomy and the means of providing concerted action were lacking.

One drawback was that the instrument of centralised policy, the Federation itself, was badly understaffed. Besides Ashton there were only three officers; Sam Woods, Aspinwall and Robert Isherwood. All three were local secretaries and had to administer their own branches, besides travelling throughout the coalfield asserting the Federation's presence at individual collieries. Their untiring efforts, it is true, helped to keep the organisation active. Woods, from Ashton and Haydock branch, was the Federation's first President. His background was similar to that of Thomas Ashton, two years his senior; pit boy, hewer, checkweigher, local agent - the traditional pattern for the union officer. Woods was an extremely talented individual; a writer of pit life prose ⁽⁴¹⁾ and the holder of a manager's certificate, he was also a Baptist preacher and a prominent Radical, undeniably handsome, respected and a teetotaler. ⁽⁴²⁾ Thomas Aspinwall, born at Bickerstaffe in the same year as Woods, 1846, had been dismissed by Bromilow, Fosters' collieries in 1880 for leading a strike. In the mid 1880's he was elected agent at Skelmersdale and in 1887 succeeded William Pickard as miners' agent at Wigan. He too was a local Radical, a man of immense stature, physically and intellectually. ⁽⁴³⁾ Isherwood was a less prominent figure; he had no pretensions to oratory but was nonetheless an able administrator and shrewd businessman who managed the Federation's finances.

The agents covered a particular area of the coalfield where they attempted to mediate at disputes in local collieries. This involved interviewing managers, who, as representatives of the owners, were not always friendly. In the mid eighties the agents' relations with the colliery owners were generally abrupt and often ill-tempered. (44) This slowed down union progress and the inability to reach quick settlements, especially over the sliding scale question, exposed the Federation to a good deal of pit separatism. For instance, in 1886 the miners of Ellerbeck Colliery, near Chorley, submitted voluntarily to a wage reduction whilst Ashton and Woods were pursuing negotiations with the employers. (45) It was not therefore easy to achieve a united front against wage reductions, nor a binding wages policy, and it seemed that despite the efforts of the agents, the Federation's claims of 1887 to resist wage reductions were beyond its means.

The agents were, however, already groping towards the establishment of a union structure which would gradually diminish local pit hegemony. The Federation was slowly working towards a policy of not accepting branches, formed around groups of collieries, as affiliates in their own right. Instead they were persuaded to join a district, or association of many branches, which would be the unit affiliated to the Federation. The gradual creation of a three tier system was achieved by the later 1880's and though not wholly satisfactory, many districts being too large, it did at least allow the agents to operate within an established system of responsibility which aimed at direction from above. Despite these moves, membership in January 1887 was only about seven thousand, a figure which included boys; yet in the long term union reorganisation did help the miners to

take fuller advantage of the good trade that was to come during the next few years.

3 Wages, Hours and the 1893 Lock Out

The Lancashire Miners achieved relative prosperity along with the other county unions in the central coalfields during the wages movement of 1888 to 1893. The story of this movement, involving the creation of a new, national trade union - the Miners' Federation of Great Britain - has been well documented by R. Page Arnot ⁽⁴⁶⁾ and it is really unnecessary to recount it. Note may be taken, however, of the fact that the movement was concerned with both wages and hours. These two considerations were very closely linked because as wages rose the miners began to realise that they could afford to work a shorter day. It was their concern for an Eight Hours Day that brought the mining unions fully into the political arena.

Firstly, however, came the wage breakthrough in 1888. Pickard of Yorkshire had taken the initiative in August of that year to set in progress a joint wages movement. Ashton gave support ⁽⁴⁷⁾. In October miners in West Lancashire received a ten per cent wage advance after threatening to withdraw their labour; some owners in north east Lancashire and Cheshire resisted but were brought into line by one or two small strikes. Trade was very good indeed, the average selling price of coal having risen in the MEGB area from over five to over eight shillings a ton between 1888 and 1890 ⁽⁴⁸⁾. Wages rose correspondingly. By the summer of 1889 a second advance of ten per cent was secured, although it did not come in Lancashire without a strike, the first major stoppage in the region for more than eight years, which seriously depleted the Lancashire Federation's funds. ⁽⁴⁹⁾

Yet continued prosperity helped Lancashire to ride its problems and by August 1890 the miners' wages had risen to 40 per cent above those of 1888. (50)

It was during these years of seemingly unbridled boom that the MEGB elaborated its wage theory, based on the concept of an implied minimum wage that would ensure a decent standard of living for every collier; as Thomas Ashton stated in 1893, "the Miners' Federation of Great Britain was established to get and keep a comfortable living rate of wages for its members," adding, "who will say that miners' wages are too high at present?" (51) The acceptance of such a standpoint had to take into account the length of hours worked. In Lancashire, for example, there had long been great variations in the length of shifts worked; colliers in the Manchester, Tyldesley and Leigh districts worked a shorter day than those of Wigan and St Helens, yet in some pits with a short day the men had to work six days a week. (62) There had been no unanimity as to the most suitable shift length, the owners claiming that colliers preferred longer hours in order to maintain their earnings whilst the union maintained that in general shifts were too long and caused over production of coal. With no export trade to consider Lancashire miners could afford to propose a restriction in output by working shorter shifts and between 1882 and 1887 three resolutions to this effect were made by the Federation, (53) though low wages prevented the miners from fully committing themselves to their ideas. In 1887 the Federation even went to the extent of calling a strike to enforce an eight hour day and five day week but the plan had to be dropped through lack of support, (54) even though later in the year "enormous majorities" were returned by the colliers in a ballot on

the question of restriction. (55) It appeared that Lancashire was wholly in favour of the reduced working day in principle but that the men felt it to be an impossibility so long as wages remained low.

Yet it was easy to see why miners should desire such a move. Eight Hours combined economic and social aspirations in one measure of utter simplicity. For one thing, a limit to the working day offered the prospect of regular shifts during good and bad trade alike; in bad times miners had often asked for longer hours in order to push up earnings/^{yet} in poorly organised districts it had been difficult to secure a reduction in shift lengths when trade improved and earnings proved satisfactory. (56) Lancashire had experienced such hazards in the past and this was one reason why the county federation pressed for a legislated restriction in hours. (57) Shorter hours also brought an improvement in the miners' social conditions, for it allowed them more time to enjoy the open air activities so important to them. (58) Not surprisingly, during the period of wage advances between 1888 and 1891 absenteeism in the pits greatly increased as the miners began to feel that they could now afford to have more spare time to themselves. (59) Moreover, questions of health and safety were also involved in the demand for a shorter day since it was felt that an overtaxed collier would become more of an accident risk than one who was being asked to work for a reasonable length of endurance. (60) So for all these reasons the Eight Hour Day became the common objective of the unions in the central coalfields at the beginning of the 1890's, and because it seemed to offer the best prospect of success the miners pinned their faith on the legislative method outlined by Thomas Aspinwall at the Trades Union Congress of 1889 (61).

Yet the issue produced antagonism. The employers not only disputed the validity of Eight Hours in economic terms, ⁽⁶²⁾ but objected that they were being bullied by the unions, who had already been attacking them over the question of employers' liability for mining accidents. In Parliament, where the coalowners had an insuperable advantage over the men, the Eight Hours Bill was effectively blocked after its introduction and the traditional enmity between employers and men began to assume a political character, with far reaching consequences for union policy. ⁽⁶³⁾ In addition to this new dimension to the struggles of the miners came a fresh bout of conflict on the industrial front over the question of wages, so that by 1893 both sides of the industry were locked in a seemingly irreconcilable battle.

Deteriorating relations in the coal industry were amply illustrated by events in Lancashire. During the period of good trade both employers and union had been strengthening the organisation of their respective camps; although the Lancashire coalowners had no county wide body to deal with the wages question they had now begun to coalesce on parliamentary issues in the South Lancashire and Cheshire Coal Owners' Association ⁽⁶⁴⁾ an organisation which helped to break down the traditional parochialism of the owners. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ From 1889 to 1893 the Lancashire Miners' Federation also increased its strength ⁽⁶⁶⁾, membership increasing four-fold as improved earnings encouraged miners to join their colleagues in the union. ⁽⁶⁷⁾ With the establishment of the MFCB, much political and legislative work was taken out of the hands of the Lancashire Federation leaving it more free to concentrate on its own problems. The most significant development of these years was an attack on non-unionists and a

corresponding decline in the number and importance of Pit Set Conferences; by 1892 the Federation was seriously attempting to enrol more members, even contemplating strike action as a means of enforcing full union membership at collieries, ⁽⁶⁸⁾ whilst Thomas Ashton was instructed to issue a bold circular "pointing out the benefits of the Federation.....with a view of (sic) getting all men to join the union." ⁽⁶⁹⁾ This new assertiveness on the part of the Lancashire Federation helps to explain the increased conflict in industrial relations during the early 1890's, a period which contrasted sharply with the more peaceful 1880's.

By 1892 Lancashire had adapted to the new conditions sufficiently to allow of its participation in the open trial of strength with the employers over the wages question. When, during 1892, coal prices began to drop after almost four years of boom, wage reductions were accepted by the men of South Wales and Northumberland, whilst Durham was considering accepting a cut. Sam Woods of Lancashire voiced the MEGB determination to stand firm: "to depend on our own strong hand and our own right arm." ⁽⁷⁰⁾ In March 1892 a complete stoppage was ordered in the MEGB area to clear stocks; it was neither strike nor lock out, the men simply took a week's holiday. But the gesture had little effect on the economic situation even though in Lancashire, for example, no coal was brought to the surface. ⁽⁷¹⁾ However, the display of strength by the unions, with the suggestion that they were acting in a responsible manner to safeguard the coal industry, ⁽⁷²⁾ was probably the main reason for miners' wages remaining intact in the MEGB area until the middle of 1893 whereas in Durham the men were locked out for twelve weeks during 1892 and eventually had to accept

a ten per cent wage reduction. Forseeing the drift towards a similiar position in their own district Lancashire had demanded another general stoppage early in 1893 in order to keep prices up, (73) but the idea was rejected by a national conference. (74) By the summer, the employers were beginning to demand a 25 per cent cut; since the demand was totally rejected a general lock out of MFCB members began in the last week of July. Altogether about 300,000 miners became idle. By August almost all Lancashire pits had ceased production except for those in districts where non-unionists were willing to carry on.

The conduct of the lock out from Lancashire reveals the extent to which the Federation depended on national co-operation to achieve its success. By itself it is certain that Lancashire would have capitulated to the coalowners as Durham had been obliged to do in the previous year. The Lancashire Federation began the lock out with an almost depleted treasury, the July balance sheet showing only £214 to support 38,000 members. Union leaders had to make appeals to local trades councils and tour Lancashire towns asking for donations. (75) Locked out miners in the Wigan and Ince districts, according to one account, (76) clearly suffered formidable deprivations for their support of the union, whose resources had been reduced by the frequent strikes of the early 1890's and the expensive election campaigns of Aspinwall and Woods in 1892. (77) Aid from the MFCB eased matters, but Robert Isherwood, the Federation Treasurer, realised that some men would have to be returned to the pits as quickly as possible. In August 1893 he reported to an MFCB executive committee meeting that several employers were offering to pay the old wage rates if miners were prepared to return to work. (78) When Thomas Greenall of Pendlebury Miners'

Association suggested that some men be allowed to go back the MEGB agreed.

Thus began, in apparent defiance of a popular ballot against a resumption ⁽⁷⁹⁾, a gradual reduction of the numbers involved in the lock out; the Lancashire union leadership was keen to return men at the old rate ⁽⁸⁰⁾ where possible and over 4,000 miners quickly resumed their jobs on this basis, helping to support those still out by paying a levy of a shilling a day for the duration of the lock out. The Lancashire Federation collected over £13,000 in this way. Moreover, by October 1893, about 60,000 colliers throughout the MEGB area had gone back to work at the old rate of wages. ⁽⁸¹⁾

When the lock out was eventually terminated in November 1893 the MEGB was able to wring concessions from the employers that amounted to a major breakthrough on the wages issue. A Board of Conciliation was set up, with equal representation from unions and employers, which was to have power to determine wages in the coal industry from February 1894, until which time the men were to receive the old rates. ⁽⁸²⁾ As prices continued to fall the MEGB agreed to a wage reduction of ten per cent, but it was agreed that until 1896 the wage rate should not fall below 30 per cent over and above the rate of 1888, and not rise more than 45 per cent above it. The MEGB had established a wage-floor

This undoubtedly represented a considerable industrial victory for miners' co-operation, helping to dispel the old theory that prices should bind wages in an iron yoke. Yet, in other respects the aftermath of the lock out produced a weak position for the county

federations, and this was noticeable in Lancashire. For one thing, union membership was affected and without strength in numbers the Federation was rendered less effective. Membership had reached a high water mark in 1894 but then slumped drastically over the next five years, not recovering until the temporary boom in coal prices and wages during the South African War. Such a loss was experienced at the same time by the Cotton Spinners and may even have been expected as subscriptions from members were increased to restore depleted funds; the Lancashire Miners' Federation certainly realised the need to maintain morale after a bad stoppage and even went to the extent of issuing a silver badge to all colliers who remained loyal to the union. (83) Yet a more profound and disturbing reason for loss of members was probably the dissatisfaction felt by many miners over the union leadership's handling of the lock out. The loss of Woods' seat at Ince in 1895 may well, in part, have been a reflection of such an attitude. In addition, it may be doubted whether the new wage structure bestowed as many benefits as might be assumed; certainly during the 1890's wage increases were slow in coming and conflict with the employers remained a prominent feature of the Lancashire coalfield, as may be seen from the fact that in 1896 miners at St Helens were demanding a ten per cent advance whilst at several other groups of collieries attempts were being made by the owners actually to reduce wages. Moreover, one outstanding question of great importance to ordinary miners still seemed no nearer a solution - the Eight Hour Day.

4 Summary

By the mid 1890's the Lancashire Miners' Federation had achieved a degree of industrial strength that had seemed very remote in 1881 when the Federation was established. It was now far better equipped for treating with the employers and for safeguarding the interests of its members. Yet industrial security did not imply a withdrawal from political activity for the miners as it did for the cotton workers; quite the opposite, for it had become clear that the miners could not dispense with the political weapon. The success of the wages movement rendered the achievement of an Eight Hour Day all the more necessary and it was the need to complete their policies by securing a restriction of working hours that made the Lancashire Miners consistent advocates of labour representation, keeping working class politics alive in Lancashire during the 'nineties.

The political commitment was therefore established at an early stage, but what form was political action likely to take, and how quickly would it proceed? Certain characteristics were already beginning to emerge that made future patterns of development seem more predictable. For one thing, the L.C.M.F. could not fail to understand that the keynote of its success had been its position in the M.F.G.B. - a national union. Lancashire's weak position of the 1880's would never have been improved upon so quickly had it not been for the help it received through the M.F.G.B. At the same time co-operation in the industrial field led to political liaison of the same nature; by 1892 Lancashire was attempting to contribute towards the M.F.G.B. programme to send miners' candidates to parliament. This activity in turn gave rise to the realisation that Lancashire stood in a peculiar position so far as the miners' electoral influence was concerned. Neither

political party had in the past felt the need to co-operate with a miners' union that was anything but strong and, in any case, political horse-dealing was ruled out because of the deep divisions within the colliers' ranks; in consequence the L.C.M.F. had never negotiated electoral alliances such as those secured by the miners of Yorkshire and Derbyshire. Hence, when it came to sponsoring parliamentary representatives for the Eight Hour Day Lancashire felt that its disadvantages prevented a proper discharging of its responsibilities within the M.F.G.B. In fact, of all the other mining regions, the position was probably as bad only in Scotland, especially Lanarkshire, where the religious divisions among the miners and the weakness of the unions were more marked even than in Lancashire.

The result was that by the turn of the century the Lancashire Federation was only too willing to consider joining a political movement which had the twin virtues of being both a national organisation and independent of the established parties. The eventual affiliation of the L.C.M.F. to the Labour party in 1903 - the first county association to join - may therefore be seen as the outcome of a long term development starting in 1889 with its adhesion to the M.F.G.B.

It is also worth noting a further feature of the Lancashire miners' development which was beginning to emerge by the middle years of the 1890's, assuming more significant proportions at the turn of the century. This was the increased militancy arising from the rank and file miners after 1893 which led ultimately to the creation socialist strongholds within the Federation structure based on prominent local branches. There seems little doubt that this process also had its origins in the industrial history of the miners for it appears to stem from the dissatisfaction felt by the miners

with the slow progress of the Eight Hours Bill in parliament and with the forms of conciliation arranged after the 1893 Lock-Out⁽⁸⁴⁾; it marks a shift of attitude between the union leadership and the rank and file, the latter taking up the initiative in political pacemaking and through the more vocal branch unions providing a spur to the pace of political development.

4 THE NEW UNIONS

During the late 'eighties and early 'nineties a brand of trade unionism rose to prominence in Lancashire that was in many senses, both real and apparent, new. At the close of the 'eighties, to be sure, there was a significant boom in union membership among groups of workers, largely unskilled and poorly paid, who had no previous experience of trade union protection. In this sense the unions were undoubtedly new. But in other respects too the working men involved claimed to be introducing a new approach to the methods of industrial organisation and the aims of combination; for instance, they professed to hold a more militant, less compromising, attitude than the established societies of craftsmen, miners and cotton workers - which they dubbed "old" unions; moreover, they affected to build their unions on more inclusive, comprehensive lines, eschewing the old tactic of creating one union for one trade. But it was not because of these claims that the new unions became a prominent feature of working class life; in fact their industrial footholds were, for the most part, precarious, many of them failing to resist employers' attacks and trade depressions and subsequently passing into oblivion. Those unions that did survive succeeded precisely because they adopted the techniques of older trade societies and even of these successful ones none was able to match in industrial strength the miners or the cotton unions, at least before the First World War. The feature^{which}/really gave the unions their novelty and set them apart was the greater political awareness they displayed almost from the beginning of their existence. Of course, not every union established at this time exhibited an interest

in politics but in general the special character of new unionism lay in its seeing the industrial future bound up with some form of political movement. Because many of these unions were ^{inherently} weak they sought to gain strength not simply by industrial combination but also by asserting the power of the working class in politics. It is no coincidence that many new union leaders were socialists. Above all, the line of descent from this form of trade unionism to the concept of an independent workers' party in local and national politics is very marked and for this reason a discussion of working class politics in Lancashire would be incomplete without an assessment of the new unions' influence. To begin with, therefore, we must turn to the particular industrial environment that produced them.

1 New Unionism: the Industrial Background.

All industrial towns in the region experienced, to some extent, the trade union boom of the late 1880s and witnessed the arrival of the new unions. But their greatest impact was felt in one area more than anywhere else: the industrial zone stretching from the north and east of Manchester to Liverpool, and including the town of St. Helens. This area may be termed the Mersey - Irwell belt since it was located principally around those two rivers. Its industrial landscape was quite different from that of the east and centre of Lancashire; there were no massive staple industries such as cotton and coal but a more pronounced concentration of service and distributive trades, connected with the commercial and transit activities of Manchester and Liverpool. Neither of these two cities, nor their neighbouring towns and villages, possessed one single, dominant trade and so the workforce

tended to be diverse, split up amongst many different occupations.

Of the three main manufacturing towns in the area, both St Helens and Warrington followed a variety of industrial interests, whilst only Widnes could be said to be a one-trade town. ⁽¹⁾ In all, the

area probably had more in common with the great conurbation of London, in respect of its industrial appearance, than with the rest of Lancashire. ⁽²⁾ Something more: the Mersey - Irwell belt foreshadowed

the economic and social pattern of the twentieth century, with its newer industries, electrical and chemical, its shop and clerical workers and its sprawling landscape, in which the social classes were already being segregated according to wealth. Nothing could be more different from the traditional character of the coalfield and the cotton towns. The Mersey - Irwell belt was an area of great potential, whose economic peak was to come at a later date, when the great staple industries were in decline. Yet even in 1894, at the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal, a contemporary expressed the hope that:

"eventually along its banks will be an unparalleled concentration of works transferred there on account of the economy of production, either in obtaining cheap coal or cheap salt.....and facilities of transport." ⁽³⁾

At the end of the 1880's, however, prosperity rubbed shoulders with depression in this region. Commercially, the future looked bright. The two cities of Liverpool and Manchester experienced an almost unbroken commercial growth during this period; both benefited from the opening of the Ship Canal. Manchester, no longer a cotton manufacturing centre, but soon to become an important engineering district, was a typical regional capital, cosmopolitan in outlook and content, with

a particularly high proportion of foreign workers, such as Jews and Russians, in the clothing trade. Manchester had a proud history of municipalisation, which reflected its commercial success and consequently employed a large amount of workers in the various Corporation departments - water, gas, electricity, transport and markets ⁽⁴⁾ - and after 1894 had its own dockside population. Liverpool, almost equal in size to Manchester, was an even greater seaport, the centre of the transit trade. The growth of its facilities testified to increasing trade; at least six new docks were built between 1866 and 1888, four of these in the 1880's, by which time the city's dockland area had been extended to six miles of waterfront. ⁽⁵⁾ Both towns enjoyed sufficient commercial bouyancy to provide ample employment in various trades.

The situation was not so promising in the area's manufacturing towns of St. Helens, Warrington and Widnes. From the 1860's considerable chemical plants had developed at St. Helens and Widnes, drawing on local raw materials and enjoying excellent water and rail communications. However, the production of soda at both towns was geared to the le Blanc process and by the early 1890's was beginning to suffer from the competition of other industries which adopted the newer ammonia soda techniques. The result was an attempt by the Lancashire employers to sustain their industries by making intensive alterations of their production techniques, the most significant effect of which, from the workmen's point of view, appears to have been that the work was rendered more unpleasant. Though good wages could be earned in the chemical trade, the physical drain on energy was

quickly becoming intolerable. In addition to this job opportunities were declining; basic technological inefficiency, coupled with the introduction of tariffs in export markets, conspired to produce a disturbing slump in the Lancashire chemical trade during the 1890's. For example, Widnes, a new town in the 1860's, experienced a sharp population decline after 1891 as people left the town in search of employment elsewhere; the workforce of the United Alkali Company, the town's biggest employer, fell over by a thousand between 1890 and 1900. (16)

A very similar situation occurred in the plate glass industry at St Helens, whose chemical trade fared worse than that of Widnes; the adverse effects of American protection and Belgian competition almost wiped out the plate glass industry, only the giant Pilkington company surviving as glass producers in St. Helens by the early twentieth century. (7)

Because of these setbacks, therefore, the Mersey - Irwell belt remained only 'pulsatingly prosperous' (8) before the First World War and it was not simply unbridled industrial and commercial boom that fostered new unionism in the area. At St. Helens and Widnes, for instance, union growth was determined by worsening rather than improving, conditions; but the unions established in these towns were demonstrably those that failed to endure. Other groups of workers were able to take advantage of increasing prosperity and more regular work to form unions and wring concessions from employers who were anxious to avoid strikes during good trade. Thus, although the general economic background of the area provides a clue to the origins of the new unions, their rise did not have a single cause. We must therefore look

more closely at some of the unions involved.

2 The Rise of the New Unions, 1889 - 1892

Most of the new unions that appeared between 1889 and 1892 were genuinely new in the sense that their members had never previously been organised, whether they were workers in industries that had no tradition of unionism or simply examples of backward regional development in old established, unionised trades. ⁽⁹⁾ Although it has been shown that the new unionism which developed in London during 1889 had been anticipated, often by a few years, in the provinces ⁽¹⁰⁾, few of the new unions were evident in Lancashire before 1889. ⁽¹¹⁾ The earliest sparks in the region were seen immediately after the London conflagration, the more stable elements of the unskilled reacting first - dockers, gas and chemical workers. The beginnings of unionism among the dockers and gas workers were directly inspired by movements elsewhere. The Liverpool dockers were pressured into action by stoppages enforced by J. Havelock Wilson's Sailor's and Firemen's Amalgamation ⁽¹²⁾ whilst the gas workers of Manchester were influenced by the success of Will Thorne's organisation in London. By the summer of 1889 the stokers and labourers of the Manchester and Salford municipal gas works had been organised into a branch of Thorne's National Union of Gasworkers and General Labourers, partly as a result of assistance received from the Salford social democrats W. K. Hall, George Tabbron and Bill Horrocks. ⁽¹³⁾ They secured eight hour shifts shortly after their London colleagues. At Liverpool the dockers combined to form the National Union of Dock Labourers under the inspiration of two Ulstermen, Richard McGhee and Edward McHugh, neither of

whom were working dockers; but according to a later official of the union, who at this time was an observer, "the Liverpool men flocked in their thousands to join the union when the local branch was opened." (14) Societies had by this time also been established among the plate glass and chemical workers at St. Helens; the two principal ones appeared to be the United Plate Glass Workers, which claimed about 800 members, (15) and the Chemical and Copper Workers, established by a former party political agent, P. J. King, who was quite soon able to win a general pay advance for his members. (16)

Trade recovery, increased demand for labour, socialist inspiration and localised concentration of the workforce, all these factors aided the establishment of the first new unions in Lancashire. Yet within months of their formation all three groups suffered setbacks. At Liverpool and Manchester the issue between unions and employers was non-unionism. James Sexton, a founder member and later secretary of the Dockers, believed that trouble came to Liverpool when the port employers inspired a seven weeks strike in the winter of 1889-90 in order to "stamp out the union before it attained its full strength", (17) although the dockers themselves seem to have been keen to test their union's power. McGhee had devised a "Docker's Button", changed quarterly and issued to all paid up members; he had attempted to secure the wearing of a button as a condition of employment in the docks. The employers rejected the idea, countering by refusing to employ dockers who wore the button. Members deserted the union and quickly as they joined. (18) After a disturbed stoppage work was resumed in April 1890 when the union agreed to abandon the non-unionist issue (19)

by dispensing with the button. Sexton estimated that the men's working conditions improved immensely as a result of the strike, though soon afterwards old standards began to creep back, and since the employers refused to recognise the union ⁽²⁰⁾ it seemed that by the end of 1890 trade unionism had made little progress in the Liverpool docks.

A combination of union ineptitude and truculence on the part of the employers accounted for the defeat of the Manchester Gasworkers at the same time. A strike arose at the close of 1889 over the employment of non unionists; the Gas Committee had decided to offer better wages and working conditions to all those who would leave the union and the local branch nautrally opposed the scheme, although according to Will Thorne, the national secretary, it was over-~~zealous~~alous in its action. In Thorne's view the men handed in their strike notices against his and the local secretary's advice. Thorne attempted to get the notices withdrawn but failed. In due course the Manchester men struck work and were followed unofficially by those in the Salford gasworks. The strike ran on to a disastrous end; substitute labour was successfully imported by the Gas Committee and many of the union men were unable to go back to their old jobs. "I thought, and still think", commented Thorne much later, "it was one of the most foolish strikes that the union was ever connected with." ⁽²¹⁾ In reality, however, the blame cannot be laid entirely on the men's shoulders; the local secretary appears to have given strong backing to the attempt to enforce the principle of "every man with a ticket" ⁽²²⁾ and even Pete Curran, a national organiser of the Gas Workers, admitted in 1891 that the defeat had been caused by the injudicious actions of the local officials. ⁽²³⁾

Whenever the employers chose to resist they were able at this stage to defeat the unions. The St. Helens workers were content, during the first year of their union's existence, with the initial advances gained, but at the end of June 1890 the men of the United Plate Glass Workers came out of Pilkington's Cowley Hill works because they said wages were being reduced. (24) Pilkington's introduced blackleg labour to keep the processes going whilst Bradbury, the union secretary, conducted the strike for over four months; then he accepted mediation by the Mayor of St. Helens, who promised that "work was ready for the good boys as soon as they chose to give in their names". (25) Bradbury advised a return to work at the old rates, a move supported by the recently formed St. Helens Trades Council, but not by P. J. King. King had been leading a sympathy strike at Pilkington's Sutton works and tried unsuccessfully to keep the Sutton men out when the others returned. His manoeuvres were further disappointed the following month when some of the members of his union walked out of Pilkington's chemical works at Widnes. The strike may well have been engineered by the employers to deplete union funds, since about two thousand men became idle. King reluctantly supported his members, though the payment of fifteen shillings strike money a week was a heavy drain on union resources and he warned that "this was the last time an affair of this description would be tolerated," adding that he would "lead or leave". (26)

These setbacks, however, did not inhibit the development of new unionism and by 1891 its effects could be seen over a wide area of south east Lancashire. Ideas were no doubt spreading through personal contact, socialist encouragement and the ease of organising during good

trade. Some unions were very local in scope, others the result of national planning; for example the Navvies, Bricklayers' Labourers and General Labourers, a London based union, established branches during 1890 for men working on the Manchester Ship Canal construction and by September was well supported at Eccles, Salford, Cadishead and Warrington. (27) The most prominent of the local unions were those ^{of} transport workers and shop assistants; by September 1890 the Tramway Employees originally based at Manchester and Salford, had spread to Oldham, Rochdale, Ashton and Stockport under the direction of G. T. Jackson, whilst the more extensive Carters' and Lurrymen's Union, organised by John Kelly, was set up at Salford about the same time. In the case of the latter organisation a specific grievance accounted for its birth; the coal carters' low wages, computed by length of journey rather than by time worked, forced them to put in long hours and the union's task was to change the system. (28) A similiar grievance led to the establishment of the Shop Assistants' Union under the leadership of the socialist William Jackson, whose main object was to achieve an early-closing day in the Manchester region. The same sort of process went on among many other groups of smaller unions and the new unionism was able to extend its influence from the original districts around Manchester and Liverpool to most Lancashire towns; by early 1892 the Workman's Times was speaking of an unprecedented trade union boom.. (29)

It should be added, however, that industrial success was rarely very promising. The more cautious union leaders realised that incipient unions could not hope to take the employers on in battle until adequate funds and organisation had been achieved. This

attitude was vindicated by the example of the Labourers' Union, organised in the Bolton district by Robert Tootill, a Liberal - Labour town councillor, during 1890. (30) Tootill concentrated upon building up his funds before engaging in wage claims and by late 1891 could point to 26 branches incorporating about 5,000 members; from this base he was able to negotiate ^{for advances} /in labourers' pay in the Blackburn, Darwen, Rochdale and Radcliffe areas. (31) Against this may be noted the experience of a carters' organisation in the Darwen district, organised by the local social democrat William Atkinson; shortly after the founding of the union the men struck work at a local haulage firm to win better wages, but after being idle for over a month with no response from the employers the union was forced to capitulate, surrendering its claim. (32) Throughout Lancashire it became obvious to the new unionists that they could hardly begin to emulate the cotton and mining unions at this stage and that the best they could hope for on the industrial front was to confirm the establishment of their unions and build from a sound basis. But this was a slow process and by about 1892 even it had produced its casualties.

The stumbling blocks of employer opposition and returning economic depression were too much for some unions; the most resilient were the pioneers - the dockers and gas workers - who were able to retain a hardcore of members. This was achieved on the waterfront by a steadfast application of the "ca-canny" process (33) by the union men and the wearing of the docker's button in the belt to keep up morale. Even though the National Union of Dock Labourers only possessed a handful of members when James Sexton became its secretary

in 1893 it became possible shortly afterwards to lead a revival, building around the more experienced dockers and co-operating with some of the master- stevedores and quay porters. (34) In 1894, with the opening of the Ship Canal, the Dock Labourers extended their coverage to Manchester and Salford and were immediately presented with the same problems they had experienced at Liverpool four years earlier. But now with greater strength and experience they were able to deal with the dock employers in a more business-like fashion; by the summer of 1895 the dockers had successfully established the union principle in the Salford Docks after a short strike settled by a Joint Board of Conciliation. (35)

In contrast with this success was the failure of P. J. King's Chemical and Copper Workers. Although between 1893 and 1894 the union's membership appeared to fluctuate between five and ten thousand, (36) its real strength was never above a fifth of these figures. By 1895 it had disappeared altogether, weakened by the hard times in the chemical trade and by the stern resistance to unionism by the companies. A similiar fate, not quite so drastic and differently determined, befell the Navvies' Union; here, separatism and weak administration was responsible. After John Ward had achieved a membership of around three thousand along the Ship Canal by 1892 a secession movement was created by a local socialist named Leonard Hall. Hall, the son of a doctor, had been something of a footloose young man who travelled the world doing a variety of jobs before settling in Manchester where he set up the Navvies' Guide to help recruitment to Ward's Union. But his ambitions in the local socialist movement gradually began to override his

interest in union solidarity and in 1892 he carved out of Ward's union his own Lancashire and Adjacent Counties Labour Amalgamation. (37) For a time this new growth provided Hall with a sound base for his political manoeuvres but eventually his political preoccupations and his capacity for making enemies with other union leaders became detrimental to the Lancashire Labour Amalgamation. (38) By 1895 its membership had dropped from over two thousand to about 400 and its fortunes did not begin to improve until Hall was replaced by Tom Fox, who enlarged the union's scope by including more settled groups of building trade labourers. (39)

The apparent disappearance of many other small unions may be accounted for by other reasons. Some organisations, initially active in Lancashire, found greater strength and stability in other regions and shifted their emphasis accordingly. The late 1890's saw the Tramway Amalgamation and the Shop Assistants with a far wider network, the latter finding South Wales an especially profitable area. (40) The histories of the smaller unions of a local nature - involving a multitude of tradesmen such as paviors, quarry workers, hairdressers, plate moulders, hackney carriage drivers and bakers - are to be seen reflected in the growth of the Trades Councils during the 1890's. Many experienced a substantial increase in affiliations; for example the Bolton Trades Council's membership increased from just under 14,000 in 1891 to 19,500 in 1896 with the affiliation of about thirty new, small societies which raised the Council's total number of affiliated unions to over ninety. (41)

Yet, in general, the new unions did not provide a significant

breakthrough in purely industrial terms. A glance at the strength of the principal new unions in Lancashire during the 1890's (42) reveals a shallow industrial base. We should look elsewhere for the main significance of the new unionism.

3 New Unionism: Theory and Practice

The special characteristic of the unions that grew up during these years resided in the ideological differences they exhibited against their predecessors.

There was no lack of contemporary awareness for the existence of "old" and "new"; for instance, John Malcolm of the Twisters' and Drawers' Amalgamation, a cotton union, referred in 1891 to

"the wave of trade unionism which during the past twelve months has swept over the country, has not yet receded from us, nor been without its favourable and beneficial results in Lancashire....." (43)

The older trade union officials, whose societies were largely unaffected by the boom of 1889, often unconsciously shaped the new unions by their attitude towards them. John Fielding, for example, of the Bolton Spinners, represented the view of "two schools" of trade union thought whose interests were beginning to merge after initial divergences; writing in 1892 he pointed out:

"The general position of the Labour movement seems just now to be one of breathing time and consolidating the work already accomplished. The great wave in favour of trade unionism which swept over the country three years ago appears to have spent itself.....the disposition to look askance at each other by the old and newly founded unions is fast dying out: the latter discerning that much they took exception to in the former was after all the result of experience which they would have to copy". (44)

The main difference between old and new, and which was responsible for a theoretical difference in outlook, was the fact that new unionists were usually unskilled. The established societies had skimmed off all those whose crafts decided their scarcity value; the vast numbers of dockers, gas stokers and transport workers had no scarcity value except insofar as they were prepared to do tedious and often dirty work. It seemed, therefore, that the only way of achieving strength and solidarity among these groups of workers was by including every one in a single big union. (45) Hence the very widespread aspirations of many essentially local unions - the National Union of Dock Labourers on Merseyside, or the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants at Manchester, or Tom Fox's British Labour Amalgamation, of south east Lancashire. As Dr. Hobsbawm has aptly noted: "this was not grandiloquence but - so it was thought - the bare recognition of facts." (46)

Being unskilled made the new unionists conscious of their weakness. It was fairly easy to break their strikes, unless, as J. R. Clynes of the Gasworkers urged, each union extended its coverage. (47) Such a need threw great emphasis on organisational techniques - especially on tackling the question of non-unionists. Pete Curran of the Gasworkers argued in 1891 the need for all gas stokers to join his union in order to prevent their replacement during winter months by cheaper labour drawn from the ranks of the unemployed. (48) Watson of the General Railway Workers adopted a more hostile attitude towards non-unionists when speaking in Lancashire during the same year, advising non-society railwaymen to join the union quickly or find life made "thundering hot" for them. (49)

In 1892 Leonard Hall pressed the Trades Union Congress to adopt moral sanctions against unions that allowed their members to replace strikers.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Seen in this light it is not surprising that many people should have regarded the new unionism as violent.

Yet, whilst the concept of general and industrial unions was implicit in the new unionist philosophy, such organisations rarely materialised on a wide scale. Separatism was evident from the beginning. It has already been noted that the most successful unions were those which gained an industrial or geographical hardcore, thus depending far more on their footholds in certain industries than on their ability to recruit indiscriminately.⁽⁵¹⁾ This fact served even more to thin the new unionists' ranks and weaken their industrial bases. Inter-union rivalry consequently became quite intense. A good example of this development is provided by the various unions of carters and transport workers which grew up; for instance, John Kelly's Manchester and Salford Lurrymen differed very little in its occupational content from the Amalgamated Carters' and Lurrymen's Union, organised by James Kirkman and Robert Tootill in the Bolton district. Both societies competed for members in south east Lancashire. Similarly, Leonard Hall's union was duplicated by the Machine Workers and General Labourers, which operated around Bolton and Bury, and when Hall attempted to recruit from this area, in 1891, he was promptly told by his opposite number in the local union to keep to his own territory.⁽⁵²⁾ In short, the new unions in Lancashire tended to hang separately, rather than together, and it would be misleading to suggest what they lacked in industrial unity they made up for in political cohesion.

What were the political attitudes of the new unionists? Did they become the backbone of a new political party? In answering these questions it should first be remembered that many new unions had been encouraged by the assistance of social democrats and, equally, it may be suggested that new unionism provided a stimulus to the S.D.F. (53) Salford, for example, which was a good area for the S.D.F. until about 1892, displayed a close connection between the new unionism and social democracy; Horrocks, Tabbron and W. K. Hall had been instrumental in setting up the Salford branch of the Gasworkers whilst Purves was to organise the dockers there. Leonard Hall may possibly have been a member of the S.D.F. when he became an official of the Navvies' Union. In general, however, Lancashire new unionism was not characterised by strong social democratic leanings. The main task of the party was to make socialists and the demands made upon the individual by the party probably meant that its appeal was confined to the more politically conscious, militant working class leaders. The role of Marxist socialism in the political development of the new unions in Lancashire was never as prominent as it was in London during the same period.

In Lancashire a more marked division between the social democrat and the non-socialist worker was evident. There was an influential body of opinion which pulled against social democracy. It came from the columns of the Workman's Times, launched in 1890 by Joseph Burgess, a former writer with the Cotton Factory Times. Burgess was a socialist, though not an S.D.F. man, and displayed great sympathy with the new unionist cause, providing moral encouragement for those engaged in the struggle to establish trade unions against employers' opposition. The Workman's Times gave much space to small groups of workers, airing their grievances, offering them practical advice and praising

their achievements. It became an invaluable guide to anyone engaged in union organisation at this time.

When the new union movement began to lose its impetus during 1892 the Workman's Times subtly changed its tone from an industrial to a political emphasis, using the sense of economic oppression it had conveyed to urge the creation of local parties representing the working man's point of view; as Peter Curran put it, the worker had been bulldozed for too long at election times. (54) The political character of the new unionism came to be shaped less by an overtly socialist outlook as by an interest in the creation of an independent working man's point of view in politics. This was the attitude of the young activists who were to set up the Independent Labour Party in Lancashire and Yorkshire during 1892 and 1893: James Sexton of Bootle, secretary of the Dock Labourers, James Bartley, who wrote for the Workman's Times, Alf Settle of Manchester and Leonard Hall, the Navvies' leader. Perhaps the most able was J. R. Clynes, the son of an Irish labourer from Oldham. Clynes, born in 1869, had been educated at a local catholic school where he revolted against the harsh discipline. In 1879, he started work as a piecer in an Oldham cotton mill, revolting against this as well by writing letters to the local newspapers against the conditions of factory life. His concern for the plight of the piecers led him to organise a separate union for them in the mid 'eighties (in his own words "it did not last very long" (55)) whilst his unbounded energy brought him into great demand as a speaker at workers' meetings. Clynes experienced his first taste of politics in the Irish National League and developed his own eclectic social philosophy from reading

Ruskin, Carlyle, J. S. Mill and R. W. Emerson. Shortly after the gas strike in Manchester Clynes was enlisted by Will Thorne of the Gasworkers as a union organiser, thus transferring from the mill to a wage of thirty shillings a week with the Gasworkers. (56)

Such men attempted to lead a working class political revolt. They shared a common outlook: young rebels with no respect for established systems, often uprooted, footloose and aggressively aware of the social and economic injustices of Victorian England. Although it was perhaps inevitable that such people should find their way into trade unions their vision was never limited to purely industrial action. They were often prepared to acknowledge the limits of trade union methods, as in 1892-93 when the cotton trade lock out ~~was~~ revealed the great disparity between the strength of the established unions and that of the new ones: "this is something like trade unionism", commented the Workman's Times on the Spinners' position, "and ensures a fair fight between employers and employed". (57) Since few new unions could hope to achieve this position there was a chance that their members might accept political action through an independent working man's party.

4 Towards and Independent Party

The new unionists had begun to underwrite legislative action on industrial questions when they arrived at the Trades Union Congress in 1890. (58) This did not necessarily mean the acceptance of an independent position, however; John Kelly of the Manchester Carters, for example, remained a confirmed Liberal, as did Robert Tootill, who continued to represent the Lib-Lab position on the Bolton Town Council. Some still retained a wish to emulate the cotton unions:

T. S. Nuttall of the Paper Mill Workers observed that,

"with leaders animated by reasonable wishes and purposes for the interests of their trade as a whole, and commanding the respect and confidence of the workpeople, they could not fail to exercise a beneficial influence. They would lift Labour problems out of the atmosphere and the arena of class political prejudice (Cheers)". (59)

Furthermore, those new unionists who followed the Workman's Times lead and believed that it might be possible to pursue an independent position in municipal politics soon discovered that it was extremely difficult to break the hold of the established craft unions in the trades councils. (60) An example of this may be found at Oldham. The Trades Council was the biggest in Lancashire but its political interest was very limited, the executive council being composed of representatives from the three major cotton unions and the local engineering workers, all comparatively strongly organised. Thomas Ashton of the Spinners, as Trades Council secretary, had taken great care to assist the affiliation of new societies and by 1891 a substantial increase in membership had taken place; yet there was no change in the Council's political policy, still designed to accommodate the old unions. (61) Similiar trends were seen in other trades councils in the south east Lancashire district.

At one town, however, circumstances combined to present a more favourable situation: this was at Manchester, the area most affected by new unionist growth. Yet even here the progress towards an independent working man's party was not a straightforward one; it depended upon an initial movement of all working class groups in the area away from liberalism. In 1889 the Manchester and Salford Trades Council began to open its ranks to new unionists, carrying out a campaign for municipal

contracts to be given to trade union firms. The City Council agreed to this system in 1891. (62) During this time there developed a quite close community of interest between the older established societies, which still controlled the Council, and the new unions; G. D. Kelley, the secretary, helped considerably in new union recruitment (63) whilst other members of the executive committee held views that chimed well with new unionist attitudes. At the 1890 Trades Union Congress, for example, G. J. Davies of the Carpenters and Joiners voted for the idea of an eight hour day by legislation and was able to put the weight of the Trades Council behind this policy without too much opposition. (64) issues
On political/the Council was still firmly aligned with radicalism in 1890, with when it became affiliated to the Labour Electoral Association, a liberal labour organisation of which G. D. Kelley was president. Consequently a scheme was drawn up to run Kelley as Liberal labour candidate for St. George's Ward in the 1890 City Council elections and although he did not go to the poll owing to an unfavourable political climate in that ward the Trades Council still maintained its interest in labour representation and instructed the executive committee "to consider and report to the Council the best means to adopt to secure the representation of labour on the City Council." (65)

Nonetheless, Manchester still seemed a long way from achieving the kind of independent labour party that had been established across the Pennines in Bradford during May 1891. At this time Manchester offered little hope for the Workman's Times desire to see an organisation by which the working class could take the reins of political power. (66)
An attempt by Matt Arrandale of the Trades Council to gain a seat on the

City Council as a Liberal brought forth bitter criticism from the Workman's Times about working men who "hob-nobbed with party politicians."⁽⁶⁷⁾ The situation seemed hopeless.

Yet two events helped to alter the course of development. First of all, a meeting took place in July 1891 comprising all shades of political opinion in the Manchester and Salford area. The object was to discuss the means whereby a Manchester Labour Party might be established; nothing very significant came out of the meeting, except the disclosure of much disagreement.⁽⁶⁸⁾ But a second, and more crucial, decision was taken shortly afterwards; this was the acceptance by the Trades Council of the idea of an independent party. Over the previous year the Council's relations with the Manchester Liberal Association, with whom it had co-operated in local politics, had become increasingly strained; Kelley's proposed candidature of 1890 had been given no encouragement by the Liberal party, which in addition had proposed only one working man's candidate for the 1891 School Board election. Even before this apparent snub by the Liberals there had been considerable heated discussion in the Trades Council about the attitude of the Liberal Association, Jenkins of the Bakers Amalgamation, a self confessed "rabid radical", furiously denouncing its conduct.⁽⁶⁹⁾ When the Trades Council sent a letter to the Liberal headquarters requesting a meeting on the subject of labour representation no reply was received for almost two months, a delay considered by the Council to be a gross breach of courtesy. It was then resolved to have no further dealings with the Liberal Association over labour candidates. In August 1891 the Trades Council refused to join a Free School Board

Party, a radical front which offered working men a small share in the Liberal campaign. (70) The Trades Council was ready to sink its future in a new working men's party. In the same month a pilot body, the Salford Labour Electoral Association, was launched.

It proved easier to establish the Electoral Association than it did to secure agreement on its political alignment. The principal figures in attendance at its inception represented the various interests in the Manchester labour movement. Jackson of the Tramway Employees and John Kelly of the Carters spoke for the new unions, Roberts of the Bookbinders for the Trades Council and its craft unions, whilst the S.D.F. in Salford was represented by several delegates including George Tabbron who was also a member of the Brassfounders' Union. Rogerson, a member of the Carpenters and Joiners, opened the discussion by suggesting that the Electoral Association should be designed to include the "thousands of workers" outside the pale of trades unionism, although Roberts countered this by arguing for a closer identification with trade union aims. The socialists present sensed that any attempt to confine the party solely to trade unionists could mean its slipping back into the Liberal fold and so Alf Settle, a young man who had connections with both the S.D.F. and the Fabian Society admitted that he would attempt to make the organisation subservient to socialism. The scope of the debate was thus considerably widened. The next speaker proposed that the Association's aim should be to obtain parliamentary and municipal representation for working men, an idea favoured by the S.D.F. and accepted by the meeting unanimously. Settle then went on to convince the gathering that officials of political parties

should be denied membership, at which point Tabbron made a most significant gesture of independence by suggesting that the party should not give support to candidates of any other political organisation but should support only working men. (70)

At this point, the meeting ended with the newly formed Labour Electoral Association clearly endowed with a protean character. All members were united in their hostility to official liberalism (72) but the question of the new party's ideology was not solved. Friction between the radicals and socialists soon developed. At the Salford municipal council elections in 1891 the L.E.A. sponsored two candidates, Rogerson and Settle, the latter in the same ward where he had polled well for the S.D.F. in 1890. The antagonisms in the L.E.A. were revealed during the elections, however, since Settle was opposed by John Kelly, whose union had sponsored him to fight specifically against socialism. The vote was split and with Rogerson also defeated the L.E.A.'s impact was negligible. (73) Relations were not improved by wranglings during the summer over a parliamentary candidate to represent the workers in the South Salford constituency. The L.E.A. had chosen Thomas Harris, a Fabian, who worked as a journalist with the Sunday Chronicle. But at the end of February 1892 Harris resigned from his position because of ill-health and W. K. Hall, a nominee, of the S.D.F., stepped into the breach. Working class radicalism was therefore further excluded from the L.E.A. (74)

Other events had also contributed to the widening breach between radicalism and socialism. In December 1891 Robert Blatchford's socialist journal the Clarion had appeared, shortly after the Fabian Society

had carried out a successful campaign in Lancashire which converted many working people to socialism. (75) At the beginning of 1892 Joseph Burgess began to spread the idea of an "independent labour party" through the columns of the Workman's Times and in May of that year he opened a subscription list for the collection of funds to establish such an organisation. The effect of such propaganda in Manchester was to bring together leading socialists and independent labourites and to cause the setting up of an Independent Labour Party following a meeting of these people in the office of the Clarion. (76) On May 17th a crowded public meeting in St. James' Hall, Manchester, decided upon a constitution for the new party; it stated a socialist objective and an independent working class political position:

- 1 That the new party's programme be 'the nationalisation of the land and the instruments of production'.
- 2 That the party shall devote itself to securing the election of members to all representative bodies for the purpose of realising the programme of the party.
- 3 That no members of any organisation connected with the Liberal, Liberal Unionist or Conservative parties be eligible for membership in this party.
- 4 That all members of this party pledge themselves to abstain from voting for any candidate for election to any representative body who is in any way a nominee of the Liberal, Liberal Unionist or Conservative parties. (77)

The formation of the I.L.P. marked a significant development of working class politics. Initially, however, its stature was slight and it by no means unified the many different labour organisations throughout Lancashire. It was, in 1892, only a Manchester party and could not even be said to have captured the political support of the new unionists.

5 Summary

It is, perhaps, easier to decide what effects the new unions did not have on the labour movement in Lancashire than it is to agree on their more positive significance. For one thing, it would be unwise to stress too much the industrial impact of the new unionism. From a strictly numerical point of view the unions established after 1889 did not have sufficient strength in the labour force to be able to match the power of the cotton and mining unions. By the close of the nineteenth century the number of permanently organised trade union members in the region had been increased marginally by the establishment of new unions (78), although not significantly enough to have created an influential body of opinion. Moreover, two other factors should be considered in assessing the overall influence of the new unions; firstly, they were never united in aim and policy and no single organisation was powerful enough to take the lead and stamp its character on the movement so that sectional interests were always evident, and this makes it difficult to speak of new unionism as a coherent^{expression}/of opinion; secondly, it may be seen that the ideological characteristics of the new unionism were largely illusory: in practice the revolutionary interpretation of trade union policy and structure offered by the new unions failed to materialise and most unions fell back on the methods of the old established societies. For these reasons, therefore, it would be misleading to assign to the new unions the role of a "third force" in Lancashire working class politics.

And yet there are undoubted links between the new unions and both a revived and new socialist movement. How is this to be explained?

We cannot say with any certainty that as a general rule new unionist industrial policy led directly to political action. The revolutionary ethos of the new unionism, with its comprehensive solutions for working class action, rarely became anything more than an idea; it was hardly ever translated into practice. Since many new unions adopted the same industrial tactics as established societies it is reasonable to assume that many of them also took up similar political attitudes. It is, of course, likely that the industrial weakness of new unions made them willing to adopt the political weapon; yet many kept out of politics, particularly if they were content with industrial progress made through local trades councils, as was the case with the several small societies in the cotton districts which made some advances in this manner. To be sure, some unions did turn to political action to secure reforms such as Fair Contracts or because they had accepted the arguments of the Workman's Times. But the outcome of such activity was not necessarily socialism. John Kelly's Carters and Lorrymen for instance, is a good example of a union prepared to support candidates at local elections, though these were usually Lib - Labs and outrightly opposed to socialism. In fact, the early manoeuvres in Manchester to form a workingman's party revealed the variety of opinion that existed among new unionists. Moreover, the union which displayed the most consistent interest in left-wing politics was the Liverpool Dockers ⁽⁷⁹⁾ and this was one of the biggest and probably strongest (it was certainly not the weakest) of all the Lancashire new unions and it had achieved its strength by creating a solid base among a single group of workers in a clearly defined geographical area - hardly a reflexion of new union theory.

It is clearly unrealistic, therefore, to suggest that the industrial experiences of the new unions produced a different attitude to working class politics from that displayed by the cotton and mining unions. The fact is that the links between socialism and the new unions were mainly personal. Many, though not all, of the new unions were led by socialists and there developed a *cadre* of left-wing leaders such as Clynes, Sexton, Leonard Hall and Alf Settle all of whom achieved prominence in politics. Their views, however, were not formed as a result of their experiences in industrial unions; all were socialists, either Marxists or of the more "ethical" variety, before they became union officers. The I.L.P. was partly the creation of such people and, in particular, of those among them who did not accept the S.D.F. approach to socialism but it was never the straightforward projection of new unionist aims into the political arena and the party could never rely on a ready-made body of support among new unionists. The I.L.P. was, in fact, an elitist movement, just as the S.D.F. was, and differed from the later Labour Representation Committee in that it was based on individual support and not, as the L.R.C., on trade union affiliation.

In the final analysis, therefore, it may be suggested that the shift towards an independent working class position in Lancashire, culminating in the foundation of the I.L.P., sprang from the same economic and social background that gave rise to the new unionism, but that the institutional links between the industrial and the political movements were very tenuous and therefore not significant enough to product a major political breakthrough.

Chapter 5

Parliamentary Elections, 1885-1906

Between 1885 and 1906 Lancashire began to assume its modern political appearance. The traditional party alignment of Conservative and Liberal, which characterised the nineteenth century, was gradually being replaced by the confrontation of Conservative and Labour that we know today. In general it might be said that the rise of the Labour party introduced the concept of class as the principal determinant in political behaviour and that this was ultimately to override the sectional loyalties of the earlier period, hence the basic difference in the politics of this century compared with the nineteenth. Clearly, though, the process of political change is both complex and long-term and it may be misleading to oversimplify it. For instance, the Labour party in Lancashire still had a long way to go in 1906 before it would be able to compete on equal terms with its main adversary; can we therefore terminate the story of its development before the General Election of 1945? Moreover, there continued until well into the twentieth century a hardy breed of working class Conservative in north west England⁽¹⁾, a predominantly industrial region where, according to our rule of thumb interpretation of political change, the Labour party ought to have swamped all opposition with working class votes.

Nevertheless, the problem remains of attempting to delimit a period of political change when developments of long-term significance can be picked out. The years between the General Elections of 1885 and 1906 provide this critical period. The main intention of the present chapter is therefore to examine the issues that dominated the election campaigns in Lancashire at this time. Of course, an initial objection may be raised

against this method of approach: do electoral issues really have any influence on the way people vote? It is now generally accepted that the electorate does not behave very rationally during elections; that it does not weigh the arguments of the contending parties dispassionately as, for example, a judge and jury might scrutinise the evidence in a court of law. Voting considerations are shaped by a variety of factors among which the economic and social environment of the individual has an important influence; according to Professor Blondel, "politics is probably affected by all the forces which shape the social structure of a country."⁽²⁾ There is no reason to believe that this was any less true in the late nineteenth century and, that being so, any survey of voting behaviour and political change which failed to take into account economic and social change would be very shortsighted. Hence this problem is tackled in Chapter Six. And yet the issues involved at General Elections cannot be ignored entirely; some of them do produce a critical attitude on the part of sections of the electorate and help to explain changes in voting behaviour. Electoral issues may therefore be a partial cause of change. In addition, the study of elections assists in determining the extent of change, reflected in the shifting balance between the parties.

The present chapter therefore attempts to provide both a yardstick against which the progress of the political labour movement may be measured, and a preparatory discussion for the problems looked at in the following chapter.

1. Electoral Structure of Lancashire⁽³⁾

The redistribution of seats in 1885 gave this region 54 constituencies, returning 59 Members of Parliament. This more than doubled the number of seats in the region largely because of the sub-division of the former county constituencies. Previously there had been 4, each returning 2 MPs. In 1885 there emerged 21 separate divisions with single representation. The boroughs also increased their representation. Liverpool and Manchester, each with three Members under the old system, were given nine and six single Member divisions respectively. Salford became a three division city whilst Blackburn, Bolton, Oldham, Preston and Stockport were allowed to retain their dual representation. Wigan, however, lost one of its two Members, as its population had dropped below 50,000 (the electorate was between 6 and 7,000). Clitheroe was the only borough to lose its status, being subsumed into a new county division bearing its name. After 1885, therefore there were 38 borough and 21 county seats in the region.

The Redistribution Act also had the effect of grouping the majority of Lancashire seats into one category, that with between 7,500 and 12,500 electors,⁽⁴⁾ which included most of the medium sized towns where middle class influence over the industrial workers was still important. Significantly, however, this type of constituency was becoming less prominent. In 1885 four fifths of all the region's constituencies were of this nature; by 1906 only half were - the trend was to bigger units in which the working class was more concentrated in its own urban quarters.

Declining electorates were rare, although in the commercial centres of large towns such as Manchester and Liverpool they were sometimes seen. With business people moving out into the residential suburbs the

electorate of Manchester North West fell by over 1,000 in 20 years, whilst that of Liverpool Exchange dropped even more heavily. The only other seats to lose electors were the Scotland and Abercrombie divisions of Liverpool, though probably for a different reason: the high proportion of lodger voters making registration extremely difficult.

Participation in elections was generally very high in Lancashire during the later nineteenth century, with polls of over 90 per cent regularly being recorded.⁽⁵⁾ A probable reason for this is that, with a high proportion of fairly small, closely knit towns in the region, people could easily record their vote in the time between arriving home from work and the closing of the polling booths at 8.p.m.⁽⁶⁾ Yet, whilst an obvious advantage, this need not commit a person to voting and it remains doubtful whether the high turn-outs were a reflection of interest in the campaign, or of a more profound social tradition.⁽⁷⁾

2. General Outline of Voting, 1867-1906

In the 1850's Lancashire moved away from Liberalism and in the period between the Second and Third Reform Acts its Conservatism took root. At the General Elections of 1868 and 1874 the Conservative party captured a comfortable majority of the seats, but in 1880 the Liberals prospered by their greater popularity nationally and 22 of the 36 Members returned were Liberals. With the limited franchise the Conservatives always did well in the four big county divisions where the small town workers were without the vote. No Liberal was returned in any of these divisions until 1880. The

industrial towns generally gave the Liberal party more support, but overall the Conservatives held the electoral balance, winning almost two thirds of the entire contests during the period 1867 to 1885.

Between 1885 and 1900 this superiority was consolidated; the party held an absolute majority of the votes cast in the region.⁽⁸⁾ The pattern was established in both the boroughs and in the county divisions, although in the latter the margin of the Conservative ascendancy was never so clearly marked.

Few expected the Tories to profit in this way in 1885: "I suppose we are out for twenty years to come", remarked one of their ministers on the eve of the General Election.⁽⁹⁾ Yet, ironically, the party was to enjoy political power for most of that period, its tenure of office punctuated only by the short Liberal administration of 1892 to 1895. Again, much to contemporary surprise, this control was in part due to support won in the great cities. After 1886 the Conservatives dominated London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester, and always polled a majority of the votes in the west Midlands and south east England.⁽¹⁰⁾ The Liberal party still counted on the urban working class but its grip on their votes was clearly weakening and it could no longer hope for a majority at all times. Consequently the party of Gladstone began to look towards the newly enfranchised county divisions (which still accounted for a majority of the House of Commons)⁽¹¹⁾ and became increasingly reliant on a "Celtic Fringe" body of support⁽¹²⁾; it began to tailor its policies for rural rather than industrial conditions.

The general character of the Tory party in the country at large was that of a middle class group closing the door against advanced radicalism and socialism: in the words of one of its more recent historians - "a party combining the defence of the constitution and the social order with the pursuit of cautious progress."⁽¹³⁾ In Lancashire, however, among a population that was very heavily working class and where constituencies of this nature predominated the Conservative party returned between 1885 and 1906 233 MPs against 121 Liberal (including Labour representatives in 1906). Overall, the Conservatives clearly made more substantial inroads into the working class vote before 1906 than did the Liberals,⁽¹⁴⁾ and in the five General Elections between 1885 and 1900 the Conservative share of the vote in Lancashire was always greater than its share in the country at large⁽¹⁵⁾.

In 1906 the picture was quite different. The issues of the campaign were almost all unfavourable to the Conservative party, which lost votes in all regions and among all classes. The Liberal and Labour parties had been organised in a secret electoral pact⁽¹⁶⁾ which in Lancashire resulted in many Labour candidates contesting seats in the major industrial towns where working class Toryism had previously been strong, thus allowing the Liberals to concentrate on their better areas. This winning formula produced 47 MPs and 55.6 per cent of the vote for the Liberal Labour coalition, but its importance lay not in the ability of the Liberals to increase their vote in traditionally Liberal districts, but rather in the Labour party's capacity to tap working class support that had previously gone to the Tories. In an electorate vastly enlarged since 1885, and with a high average turnout, the Conservative party was unable to raise its share of the vote above

the previous level; it might therefore be suggested that if the circumstances of 1906 were ever to re-appear, or, alternatively, if the Labour party was able to turn its support into permanent party loyalty then the hold of the Tories on the working class vote would be seriously weakened.

3. The Parliamentary Campaigns, 1885-1906

The General Election of 1885 roughly established the main centres of party support for the period before 1906,⁽¹⁷⁾ the Liberals being at their strongest mainly in the eastern part of the region, with the Conservative strongholds situated on the western side of Lancashire.

The most important issues that prevailed in Lancashire at this election were those of Irish nationalism and education. Following C S Parnell's Manifesto the Irish were urged to vote against the Liberal party in order to bring pressure to bear for the introduction of a Home Rule Bill.⁽¹⁸⁾ In addition, the Catholics, both English and Irish, ranged themselves against the Liberal party on the education question after Joseph Chamberlain's "Unauthorised Programme" had attacked the principle of sectarian teaching in schools.⁽¹⁹⁾ Consequently the strange sight was seen in many areas of Catholic and Orangeman voting in the same way.⁽²⁰⁾ The Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford, Herbert Vaughan, an Englishman who cared little for Irish nationalism, shared the priests' aversion to Chamberlain and advised his flock to demand assurances of parliamentary candidates that they would defend voluntary schools against the School Boards and support a plea for a Royal Commission to investigate the working of the Education Acts.⁽²¹⁾

His advice was probably most influential among the English Catholics, especially in the borough of Preston, where they were reportedly

"so powerful that if they should ever be led to act as a unit in local politics, they would assuredly turn the scale." (22)

Preston had no School Board and the voluntary principle was in consequence firmly established, but the Catholics supported the Liberal candidate T W Russell, probably because he was the party's sole candidate in the double member constituency and one Tory was therefore bound to be returned. (23) This tactic proved ineffective, however, for both Conservatives were returned, possibly as a working class reaction to the depressed trade which had coincided with the Liberal administration. (24)

Elsewhere the Liberal vote fell according to the strength of the Catholic population, the tactics of the Irish Nationalists thus being vindicated. At Blackburn, for example, where Michael Conway's Irish Nationalist party was considered to be a bastion of Liberalism, the Irish voters abstained or supported the Tories, both of whom were returned. (25) At Darwen, where "some hundreds" of Irishmen were resident in the borough, (26) the Liberal was defeated by a narrow margin although the Irish voters were clearly not unanimous against him and the adverse vote probably sprang from poor registration. (27) The Nationalist issue clearly had its greatest influence at Liverpool where religious antagonism between Irish and Protestant workers was very marked. The city contained a sizeable element of Ulstermen who supported the Orangeist faction, headed by a small but vociferous group of Protestant clergymen whom the Irish Nationalist writer John Denvir described as "bigoted, virulent and eloquent Irish parsons." (28)

The Orangemen were intense loyalists. Moreover Liverpool had a powerful Working Men's Conservative Association, founded in the 1860's, an exclusively Protestant organisation which played an important role in the Tory party machinery.⁽²⁹⁾ Archibald Salvidge, a local brewer who joined the Association in 1885 and who became its elected Chairman in 1892, later outlined the religious and patriotic spirit of the movement:

"The first and fundamental principle of Conservatism is the maintenance of State and Church. Whilst the working men look to the Government to maintain the constitutional law as attached to the State, I trust they may look to them, and not look in vain, to do all that lies in their power to enforce the law with the Protestant and National Church."⁽³⁰⁾

In such an environment the Liberal party could hope for success in normal times only among Irish electors; whilst it polled badly in the Liverpool divisions where Irishmen were not a powerful force in the electorate, the party's performance at Exchange presented a quite different picture even in 1885. Here the Irishman O'Shea was the Liberal candidate and with Parnell's sanction the Irish voters supported Liberalism, almost recording a victory.⁽³¹⁾ In general, however, the Nationalist interest proved a powerful stumbling block to the Liberals in this General Election; T.P.O'Connor; the Irish Nationalist M.P. for Liverpool Scotland,⁽³²⁾ claimed that the Irish party had attacked thirty seats in Lancashire, twenty five of which were won by the Conservative party.⁽³³⁾ In the county divisions of Gorton and Hyde the Irish supported the Liberal candidates for local reasons, but for this act the Irish party at Gorton was repudiated by O'Connor and stripped of its status in the Irish National League.⁽³⁴⁾

The new county divisions offered the Liberal party greater support and were a more encouraging pointer for the future. Even in the counties, however, the religious question remained prominent with Liberalism a more vigorous movement in the east, where Irish immigration was far less pronounced. The newly enfranchised workers in the small cotton towns were particularly quick to give their votes to the radicals who possessed a ready political leadership in the elite of manufacturing bosses; a typical example of this group was Caleb Wright, who won Leigh, a scattered constituency of comparatively strong Nonconformity supplemented by immigrant Welsh Miners. Wright was a veteran fighter for radicalism and had worked his way up the social ladder from a childhood of poverty to become a mill-owner, finally being elected Member of Parliament at the age of 75⁽³⁵⁾.

The Liberals carried many of the county divisions as the party which had brought democracy to these areas; in addition they drew on the support of many immigrant cotton workers from the West Riding of Yorkshire who had settled at towns such as Nelson, where "much higher wages"⁽³⁶⁾ could be earned. Nelson, it was said, was

"a political town and political discussions are as regular as the sunset. The Liberal club is a nightly rendezvous for men of intelligent political thought" (37)

There was a staunchly individualist political strain in these areas which proved suitable ground for popular radicalism, the alliance of workers and middle class against the established Tory squirearchy. Election policies such as the one issued by Kay Shuttleworth of Clitheroe, with appeals to

"equal rights for all", "Lords Reform" and "free trade in land"⁽³⁸⁾ undoubtedly moved the people. Moreover the county constituencies were provided with new Liberal associations in 1885 to give the stimulus to electoral participation.⁽³⁹⁾ Although Conservatism was by no means eclipsed in these eastern industrial divisions the Liberal party generally proved the more powerful after 1885 for one major reason: there was a lack of anti-Irish feeling and therefore no Tory "backlash" against the immigrant, thus allowing the Liberals to become associated with reform and therefore with the working class. Furthermore in the Rossendale and Rochdale areas Non-conformity was influential. It should not be forgotten, though, that the cotton workers were everywhere strong and well organised, as were the miners at Radcliffe, Burnley and Accrington, and would be likely to constitute an effective pressure group when trade issues were prominent.

The more westerly county divisions were much less congenial for Liberalism. In the first place there was more agriculture carried out and consequently a strong landlord influence on the Conservative side.⁽⁴⁰⁾ This was an important factor in constituencies which were large and scattered, such as Ormskirk, Chorley, Newton-le-Willows and Westhoughton; it provided a unifying influence among the electors, who knew no tradition of a middle class leadership. Chorley was an example of such a constituency which the Liberal party found extreme difficulty in contesting. The division had a strong element of native Catholics who voted Conservative, whilst its industrial population was confined in the 1880's to the town of Chorley,

which had some cotton mills, and the southern edges of the division which marched with the coalfield. The biggest part of the division was agricultural and much of the land was owned by the Lindsay family, who held a strong influence over the selection of Conservative candidates.⁽⁴¹⁾ In 1885 Richard Feilden, a local landowner and retired Army officer, fought the seat for the Conservatives against a Liberal barrister from Birmingham. The result was an overwhelming victory by over 3,000 votes for Feilden, who had ample funds at his disposal which enabled him to employ a great many carriages to convey voters to the polling stations throughout the constituency. The Liberal calculated that he was even unable to secure the normally reliable Nonconformist vote.⁽⁴²⁾ In the county divisions of Widnes and Bootle, which had considerable Irish populations that might have been expected to vote Liberal under normal circumstances, the Conservative influence was also strong, either through the predominance of outlying agricultural areas or the presence of freeholder voters.⁽⁴³⁾ The only county division to afford the Liberals some hope in 1885 was Southport, where a middle class commercial community existed.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The broad religious cleavage in the General Election of 1885 is perhaps the best general guide to the politics of Lancashire, though it does not help to explain the behaviour of Manchester. The Conservative party won all the working class divisions there in 1885 with the Liberal success confined solely to Manchester South, a middle class area. Moreover, this cannot be explained by the switch in the Irish vote since only at Manchester North were the Irish strong.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The poor Liberal performance was a surprise to contemporary party officials since it was reckoned that

powerful radical working class groups were favourable allies at Hulme, Bradford, Newton and Pendleton in Salford.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The Conservative machinery had been plainly effective, however, in getting out the vote; before 1885 the party had never fostered much hope in the large towns and largely through neglect it had lost its hold over them in 1874.⁽⁴⁷⁾ It was the provincial Tory bosses, rather than the national leaders, who provided the fire for the electoral resurgence in the cities⁽⁴⁸⁾ and Manchester Tories benefited from a working class vote compounded of deference rather than anti-Catholicism.

The General Election of 1886 further strengthened the Conservative hold on Lancashire; in terms of seats the Liberal party experienced a disaster at the polls, reduced to 11 members of Parliament in the region. There can be no doubt that the division within the party over Home Rule caused this decline. The Liberals failed to find candidates for 10 constituencies because of disagreements over policy.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Gladstone had gone to the country in July 1886, only eight months after the previous General Election, with the sole issue of Home Rule for Ireland; the proximity of the elections and the repeated emphasis on the Irish question caused a great slackening in interest and the Liberals could not be expected to make any headway in the western areas of Lancashire where they had polled badly in 1885. The reversal of the Irish vote only brought the party two gains, in the North and South West divisions of Manchester, whilst Unionist splits accounted for the loss of three important Liberal seats in north east Lancashire - the backbone of Lancashire liberalism.

The sitting Liberal at Rossendale was Lord Hartington, the Whig leader, who revealed to his constituents in April 1886 his opposition to Gladstone's policy. Peter Rylands, the radical Member for Burnley, had already intimated to the Burnley Liberal Association that he very much regretted

"that Mr Gladstone has thought it right to propose a measure for the establishment of a separate and independent parliament for Ireland." (50)

Both were supported by leading Lancashire radicals.⁽⁵¹⁾ Sir Henry James, the Member for Bury, who had clashed with the Irish Nationalists over the Parnell Manifesto of 1885, had refused a place in Gladstone's third administration (formed in January 1886), not so much because of his opposition to Home Rule but through his hostility towards the Irish party and its influence.⁽⁵²⁾ In a meeting with the chairman of the Bury Liberal Association he had been told that he would lose the backing of the local party if he forsook Home Rule.⁽⁵³⁾ But James decided to contest Bury in 1886 as a Unionist with Conservative support, whilst the Liberal party failed to find a candidate.⁽⁵⁴⁾ James retained the seat at the expense of leading his personal followers into the Tory camp.

Rosendale and Burnley were lost in the same way. Six of the fourteen members of the Burnley Liberal Executive threatened to resign unless Rylands was adopted; the others nominated their Chairman, Alderman Greenwood, to oppose Rylands,⁽⁵⁵⁾ who retained his seat with a majority of 43. Hartington caused a more decisive split at Rossendale the Unionist cause was espoused

by Brooks, his chairman, and the Liberal party was left completely disorganised with no money even to engage a registration agent.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Hartington achieved a massive majority in a low poll since, as at Burnley, there were many Liberal abstentions. This trend also caused the Liberal party to lose Accrington, whilst at Leigh and Radcliffe-cum-Farnworth the party's majorities of 1885 were drastically reduced. Home Rule thus wrought the nadir of Liberal fortunes and displayed the extreme vulnerability of a reliance on the Irish question in Lancashire; there were simply too few constituencies with a strong enough Irish nationalist vote to turn the scale in the Liberals' favour whilst the Home Rule issue clearly had no appeal to English workers.

In the later 1880's there were signs that the Liberal party might eradicate the disaster of 1886 and return to, or even improve upon, its position of 1885. Bye-election results throughout Britain seemed to confirm this progress ⁽⁵⁷⁾ although by the time of the 1892 General Election the swing in most parts of the country from the 1885 party balance was markedly in favour of the Conservatives.⁽⁵⁸⁾ In the Lancashire industrial region there was a minimal swing of +0.2 to the Liberal party⁽⁵⁹⁾ (Table 17), which meant that the Conservatives were still ahead in terms of seats.

This situation was undoubtedly determined by the same conditions which helped the Conservatives in 1885; the religious division within the working class was even more clearly illustrated in 1892, however, since the Liberal party had by then the advantage of the Irish nationalist vote.

A bye-election in the Exchange division of Liverpool confirmed this in January 1887. The seat had been marginally Conservative in 1885, although in 1886 it changed hands. The Irish were politically strong in the division, especially in the Vauxhall ward area where there was a well organised branch of the Irish National League,⁽⁶⁰⁾ which provided a sound basis for the Liberal organisation. The Conservatives had put forward their Chancellor of the Exchequer, G J Goschen, who had been looking for a seat in the Commons; his platform supported the Union and though he emphasised his erstwhile Liberal sympathies managed only to present a somewhat two sided image whereas the Gladstonian candidate offered Home Rule in a satisfactory manner.⁽⁶¹⁾ The result, a majority of 7 for the Liberal party, reflected both the strength of the Irish vote and the party organisation, as well as the disappointment of the Conservatives over their inability to woo Irish electors.⁽⁶²⁾ It might be doubted, however, that the Liverpool Daily Post's comments on the victory constituted sound advice to the victors:

"It proves that English Liberals are beginning to realise that Home Rule is a principle worth fighting for and that they can, by their unaided efforts, make it triumph."⁽⁶³⁾

Events in other bye-elections in following years seemed to show that English Liberals were looking for something more in their party's policies than Home Rule. In the late 1880's demands were beginning to be voiced for labour representation and groups of trade unionists were making their influence felt in local politics.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Their cry was for greater participation

by working men in party councils and for parliamentary legislation to redress economic injustice. Out of these demands was to grow the Independent Labour Party, which called for a shorter working day as the antidote to misery and unemployment⁽⁶⁵⁾ whilst wanting "the men who made the profits to share the profits to a larger degree".⁽⁶⁶⁾ The Liberal party was presented with the opportunity for voicing the appeals of the politically conscious working men and implementing their demands.

This advantage was not fully realised, although it was potentially far more important than the Irish Nationalist vote. Two by-elections at which the party made gains were illustrations of this point. At Burnley in February 1887 an election was caused by the death of Peter Rylands; despite his adherence to Unionism in 1886 Rylands had strong radical tendencies and for this reason the Lancashire Unionists tried to replace him with G O Trevelyan. Trevelyan, a former Liberal, refused the nomination and his place was taken by J O S Thursby, a local coalowner and prominent Conservative.⁽⁶⁷⁾ The Liberal party chose as its candidate John Slagg, the Chairman of the National Reform Union, who had been defeated at Darwen in 1886. Burnley was a quite different constituency, however; there was an Irish vote of some 400 and a strong group of coalminers, although the bulk of the electorate was composed of cotton workers among whom Nonconformity was comparatively influential. Slagg was therefore able to offer a mixed programme which emphasised religious equality, temperance reform and local self government but kept Home Rule in the background;⁽⁶⁸⁾ by winning the Irish and miners' votes he returned a majority of over 500.⁽⁶⁹⁾ Eccles,

where a bye-election took place in 1890, was a similar industrial constituency, though miners were more prominent than cotton workers and there were engineering workshops at Eccles itself in addition to some agricultural areas. The Irish vote was not especially strong and the most important single factor in the campaign was the miners' Eight Hours Bill.⁽⁷⁰⁾ The seat had been won comfortably by the Conservatives in the two previous General Elections, by a representative, in fact, of a local landowning family, the Egertons. On the death of the sitting member in 1890 the local Conservative party nominated his brother against the local manufacturer and scholar H J Roby. Roby supported the miners' demands, concentrating his campaign on the Eight Hours question and local veto issue, whilst the Conservatives made the mistake of importing Northumbrian miners to speak against Eight Hours at Pendlebury, the centre of the mining vote.⁽⁷¹⁾ Roby was able to win the seat with a majority of over 200 by refraining from Home Rule entanglements, though the Annual Register made the astute comment that

"observers on the spot declared that it was only in the districts where the colliers' vote was heavy that the Liberals increased their poll." (72)

Clearly the Liberals could win working class votes if they advanced suitable policies, although in winning back Rossendale in 1892 they placed their faith in the willingness of Nonconformists to rally to the party. Hartington had been elevated to the peerage in 1891 as Duke of Devonshire and his replacement as Unionist candidate, Sir Thomas Brooks, was unable to wield the same personal influence. On the other hand the Liberal candidate,

J H Maden, was the son of an important local employer who had no doubt greatly assisted to restore the depleted funds of the local Liberal association. The division was strongly Nonconformist in character, with cotton workers in the small towns such as Rawtenstall, Bacup and Haslingden, and also a few agricultural workers. The Irish vote was just over 400.⁽⁷³⁾ Maden's policies were tailored to fit the religious and occupational tone of the division and included Disestablishment in Wales and Scotland, local veto, land reform and Home Rule.⁽⁷⁴⁾ The Irish question was a dangerous political issue in Rossendale but Maden did not emphasise it too greatly despite the assistance he received from four professional Irish nationalist organisers.⁽⁷⁵⁾ The Liberal party was encouraged by its successes in the 1891 municipal elections at Rawtenstall ⁽⁷⁶⁾ and threw everything into the campaign; Maden was supported by Herbert Gladstone, Campbell-Bannerman and the rising star, H H Asquith; a half day holiday in the local mills on polling helped his majority to rise to over 1200.⁽⁷⁷⁾ The result brought immediate demands for a dissolution of Parliament.⁽⁷⁸⁾

At the ensuing General Election, however, the Liberal party was still associated predominantly with the Home Rule question, whilst some of its other policies such as Welsh Disestablishment and local veto on the sale of alcohol could only be considered successful vote catchers in strongly Nonconformist constituencies, of which there were comparatively few. The only new approach which could have proved capable of winning working men away from the Tories was the adoption by Liberal candidates of the Newcastle Programme of social reform.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Even this was rather reluctantly

accepted by Gladstone and was far more positive in its pledges of Home Rule than on questions affecting the payment of Members of Parliament and a shorter working day.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Moreover, the Newcastle Programme did not find favour with the middle class elements in the Liberal party who preferred the big issues of popular radicalism, such as Lords reform and Disestablishment, as the basis of party policy. Nevertheless the interest shown in social reform was an important factor in the election of Sam Woods, the Miners' President, as Liberal Labour representative at Ince, and in Thomas Aspinwall's encouraging campaign at Wigan.⁽⁸¹⁾

Yet by failing to adopt a positive line on economic and social questions the Liberals lost ground to their opponents. In addition to the areas where they had polled well in 1885, the Conservatives were able to make gains in 1892 at three important industrial constituencies. A tight hold was secured in Barrow by the Liverpool shipowner G W Cayzer. The town had many immigrant workers, both Irish and Scottish, who found employment in the shipyards and steelworks and who were likely to support a candidate with influence in the shipping trade; the town was also becoming increasingly concerned with armaments manufactures and saw its future tied to a foreign policy which called for a strong army and navy to support Imperialism.⁽⁸²⁾ The Conservatives also succeeded in making Gorton, safely Liberal in 1885, a highly marginal seat. Though it stayed Liberal in 1892 the sitting Member, Sir William Mather, lost many votes by his equivocal attitude towards the Eight Hours question,⁽⁸³⁾ on which the miners and railwaymen in the division based their votes. At Bury, Unionism still further increased its influence

through the popularity of Sir Henry James; his work on behalf of the cotton unions' factory bill⁽⁸⁴⁾ made the cotton workers determined to keep one of their most productive allies in Parliament.⁽⁸⁵⁾ The Liberal party, hoping the seat would revert to its former allegiances in the manner of Burnley and Rossendale, put forward a local candidate, Alderman Parkes, a former Mayor of Burnley, who supported an advanced programme which included the payment of Members of Parliament.⁽⁸⁶⁾ But James, with his personal following and a splendid campaign machinery which was "working like clock-work"⁽⁸⁷⁾ recorded a big majority in a poll of over 90 per cent. The contest was very much one of personality as James himself realised when he noted that

"I felt my political, almost my personal character came up for judgement before the electors of Bury." (88)

The Liberals had therefore proved incapable of raising their share of the vote with sufficient uniformity to eat into the basis of Conservative support. Their striking improvement on the 1885 position at Liverpool West Toxteth, for example, was made with the help of Irish and Catholic supporters aided by a large contingent of Welsh Nonconformist voters, though even this did not outweigh the indigenous Tory support in the Dingle and the "higher parts of the division"; the seat therefore remained solidly Conservative.⁽⁸⁹⁾ At Widnes the Liberals had an exceptionally strong candidate in the local radical Wade Deacon, who almost succeeded in winning the seat. His support came from the town of Widnes, with its high population, at least half, of Catholics in the population⁽⁹⁰⁾; had the election been decided solely on the performance in the town the Liberal party would have won easily but the constituency also included outlying agricultural districts, strongly Tory,

and a middle class residential area at Garston.⁽⁹¹⁾ Moreover, Liberal support was on the decline during the 1890's as the local chemical trade contracted because of foreign competition and many workers were forced to leave the town.⁽⁹²⁾

Thus the Liberals made substantial gains only where their traditional supporters, Irish and Nonconformists, were switching back after 1885 and 1886. The party was able to regain many of the seats in the eastern part of the region where anti-Catholicism was not in evidence but even in marginal areas the Tories fought doggedly, as at Darwen, to defend the Established Church, religious education and the principle of "one kingdom, one Sovereign, one Parliament."⁽⁹³⁾ wherever a possibility existed of Catholic votes being cast for the Liberals ⁽⁹⁴⁾ or of Home Rule entering the debate⁽⁹⁵⁾ the Conservatives were able to whip up some support from loyalist Protestant voters.

During the remainder of the 1890's the Liberal party declined seriously in the Lancashire industrial region. Little of the hostile feelings against Liberalism were revealed, however, before the 1895 General Election. The bye-elections which took place in the region during Gladstone's fourth administration were unexceptional. The conservatives retained Liverpool West Derby and a Stockport seat whilst the Liberal party held Burnley. A more important contest took place at Accrington in December 1893 after a very long parliamentary session had ended with the House of Lords' rejection of the Home Rule Bill and its mutilation of an Employer's Liability Bill introduced by the Liberal Government.⁽⁹⁶⁾ The Accrington Liberals supported the Government bill on liability whilst their opponents defended the Lords' decision.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Although the local Liberal candidate received

some support from the cotton workers and railwaymen which enabled him to win the contest, there was a noticeable drop in the Liberal share of the poll against the 1892 position.⁽⁹⁸⁾ The Annual Register could therefore justifiably comment that

"the election was..... negative evidence as to the interest taken by a distinctly working men's constituency in a measure which was ostensibly brought in for their benefit;"⁽⁹⁹⁾

it might also have added that the election had been a veiled contest of "Lords v. People" but had ignored the Eight Hours issue which was prominent in the cotton towns at the time.

A bye-election also took place at Birkenhead in October 1894. The borough had been consistently Tory since 1868 but the majorities had dwindled steadily after the retirement of the local shipbuilder - politician, Laird. In 1892 the Liberals had polled well with W H Lever, a local radical and one of the founders of the Sunlight Soap works at Port Sunlight. His benevolence was well known among local workers since he had created a housing scheme for his employees and was a keen advocate of "proper housing for the people"⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ When the Birkenhead seat was vacated in 1894 the Liberal party therefore put forward Lever in the hope that he would improve on his performance of 1892, especially since the Conservatives had imported Elliott Lees, a candidate defeated at Oldham in the previous General Election. The constituency was mixed in social character, with Irish districts,⁽¹⁰¹⁾ "a considerable villa vote" and an active Orangeist faction⁽¹⁰²⁾ Whilst Lees emphasised Unionism and defended religious education

Lever promised support for an Eight Hours Bill, employers' liability, local veto and old age pensions.⁽¹⁰³⁾ The election was decided on national issues, but with the Lords question in the background Lever came within 106 votes of victory.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

Roy Jenkins' assertion that "the election of 1895 was a disaster for the Liberals" is no less true of Lancashire than of the country in general.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ There were a series of different reasons for this. Firstly the party was divided: the splits among the leadership - Harcourt, the party's leader of the House of Commons, did not support Rosebery, the Prime Minister⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ - were reflected at constituency level in Lancashire, where the party failed to contest 10 seats. Secondly, the Liberal administration under Gladstone had been generous on time spent in attempting to pass a Home Rule Bill but it had provided no answers for unemployment, nor had it achieved its other major legislative plans for a local veto bill and Welsh Disestablishment. These factors served to discredit the Liberals in the eyes of the electorate, at the same time contributing towards a muddled election programme with some candidates emphasising the Home Rule question, others reform for workmen and some the Lords question. Consequently there were swings against the party in all but four of the region's constituencies - Birkenhead, Prestwich, Manchester North and Bury. One seat was gained, at Bolton, where a local employer's son and active Anglican, George Harwood, managed to take second place in a two member constituency.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ Harwood campaigned for Home Rule and land nationalisation and won the Nonconformist middle class vote through his support of local veto and Welsh Disestablishment.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

But the third and most important reason for the Liberal decline in Lancashire was the Government's espousal of Indian import duties on cotton. In December 1894 H H Fowler, the Liberal Secretary for India, had agreed to the Indian Government's extension of import duties to cotton goods, a move which convinced Lancashire workers that their staple trade was being mulcted to solve India's financial problems. All candidates at the General Election in the cotton towns were obliged to oppose the tariffs:

".... if one does not vote with one's constituents one may as well save oneself the trouble of standing again by resigning one's seat at once,"

commented R G C Mowbray, the Conservative Member for Prestwich.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ The effect of the cotton tariffs was most noticeable in south east Lancashire. The Conservative electoral campaign grew naturally out of the opposition to the tariffs. Trade union leaders were appearing on the same platform as Conservative politicians at the beginning of 1895⁽¹¹⁰⁾ whilst Liberal Members supported their own party in the Commons.⁽¹¹¹⁾ The election campaign at Oldham provided an excellent example of the Conservative party's advantage. The Liberals had been comparatively successful at Oldham before 1895 and had in fact won both seats in 1892, although their representatives proved equivocal on the tariff question.⁽¹¹²⁾ Both Conservative candidates were lawyers, one of them, J F Oswald, a complete stranger to the town but the other, Robert Ascroft, was a well known local solicitor who had worked for the cotton trade unions in the negotiations for the Brooklands Agreement. Trade unionists were therefore quick to recommend Ascroft to the working class electorate.⁽¹¹³⁾ The two Conservatives associated themselves with the trade question, as "bread and butter champions" and even as "labour"

candidates.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ They also enhanced their standing with the traditionally Conservative supporters in the electorate by emphasising their Anglicanism⁽¹¹⁵⁾ Sir John Hibbert, a sitting liberal and member of Rosebery's government, was the most unpopular of the four candidates, paying for his failure to denounce the Indian tariffs by receiving the lowest vote in the poll.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ The pattern of Conservative supremacy was repeated in all the other constituencies of south east Lancashire except Prestwich, where there were fewer cotton workers. The Liberal party also lost Rochdale, its strongest seat in the district; here G N Barnes of the Engineers polled 1231 votes as an "avowed socialist" candidate for the Independent Labour Party, but the effect of his candidature was not as detrimental to the Liberal as might appear at first sight. The Conservative majority was 422, partly brought about by the party's opposition to the Indian tariffs;⁽¹¹⁷⁾ on the other hand the Liberal Association has chosen to put forward as its candidate W L Bright, son of John Bright, to replace T B Potter, another famous radical of many years standing who had retired from politics in 1895.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ Despite warnings that the contest would not be won on reputation,⁽¹¹⁹⁾ the Liberal caucus continued to back Bright, who fell ill during the campaign and had to leave Rochdale. The presence of Barnes attracted the votes of discontented Liberals, whose views were expressed by the radical Rochdale Star 's comment:

"we require something more from a man than the fact that he is the son of his father." (120)

1895 therefore represented one of the worst years for the Liberal party during the entire period from 1885 to 1906. Compared with previous elections, when relatively small swings in voting had produced an exaggerated imbalance in terms of seats, 1895 represented an absolute decline of

considerable magnitude in terms of both votes and seats.

The period from 1895 to 1900 was a confusing one for both major parties. National and local issues coincided to a great extent, producing signs of conflict between and within the parties. The Conservatives were the first to experience adversity; when the cotton duties question was cleared up⁽¹²¹⁾ they were seen to be no more reliable protectors of industry than the Liberals and lost a bye-election in the extensive county division of Middleton in 1897.

Foreign policy created an important national issue with special relevance in the North West. In 1898 the Conservative Government was faced with the problem of Russian and German expansion in China, and, later in the year, with a confrontation at Fashoda with France. Salisbury's lack of assertion over the China question may have been the principal cause of the Government's loss of Southport in a bye-election that year; the middle class residents, whose interest lay in the cotton trade through Manchester and Liverpool, no doubt felt that one of the country's leading export markets was threatened.⁽¹²²⁾ The problem was equally disruptive for the Liberal party; Rosebery and Grey, as directors of foreign policy in the previous Government, had taken a strong line with the French in Africa⁽¹²³⁾ but the Manchester Guardian supported a "Little England" policy⁽¹²⁴⁾ which aroused some doubts in Lancashire. There were many Liberals in the region who felt that weakness on foreign policy could cause another Liberal disaster; thus Kay-Shuttleworth, the Member for Clitheroe, was writing to Campbell-Bannerman in 1898 that:

"In Lancashire there seems to be a good deal of division among the rank and file, as well as among leading men and M.P.s on these subjects. I doubt, however, whether the peculiar line taken of late by the Manchester Guardian represents many people's views. Indeed there are many influential and active men in Lancashire who thoroughly, or else to a great extent, approve of recent utterances of Rosebery, E Grey etc. on foreign affairs." (125)

The problem was to beset the party at the 1900 General Election.

Probably of greater importance than foreign affairs in the period before the outbreak of war in South Africa was the Ritualist or Church Discipline issue. Its influence was illustrated in another bye-election at Southport in May 1899. The Church of England had recently been displaying a tendency towards popish ritual which shocked low churchmen; a demand for "Church Discipline" was expressed through such bodies as the Layman's League and the Southport election was the first to take place after the issue had been brought into politics.⁽¹²⁶⁾ The Liberal candidate was Sir George Pilkington, a former Mayor of the Borough and the division's first Member of Parliament, who "had the advantage of being universally popular in the neighbourhood."⁽¹²⁷⁾ Southport itself was predominantly Nonconformist and though the Conservative candidate drew support from the Catholics and from some outlying rural areas such as Banks and Formby, he lost many votes among Anglicans in the borough through his prevarication on the church discipline question.⁽¹²⁸⁾ The more extreme Protestants were so dismayed by his attitude that they took the advice of the Liverpool Tory leader Salvidge and refused to vote Conservative; Pilkington's ultimate victory was cheered by the crowd assembled outside the Liverpool Conservative Club on polling night.⁽¹²⁹⁾

In the very different constituency of Oldham, a cotton town which also had a mining interest, the Liberal party again reversed the 1895 position. In May 1899 a bye-election was caused by the death of the senior member, Robert Ascroft, and the retirement of his Tory colleague J F Oswald. In an attempt to retain the seats for the party the local Conservatives ran two strong candidates - Winston Churchill, the younger son of the former "Tory Democrat" Lord Randolph Churchill, and James Mawdsley, the veteran secretary of the Spinners' Amalgamation. Both candidates had sound connections with working class Toryism, Churchill because of his fathers' political stance during the 1880's in favour of giving working men a greater voice in Conservative party councils, and Mawdsley because of his many years service in the cause of trade unionism. Although Mawdsley was sponsored by the local Conservative Association, not by his union⁽¹³⁰⁾, it was clearly hoped that he would attract a substantial working class vote, sufficient even to secure the return of the less well-known Churchill on a double ticket vote. Taking all things into consideration this was not an unreasonable hope, especially since the two Conservatives offered the kind of programme which had produced a winning formula in 1895 - "something for Oldham" was the keynote of their campaign.⁽¹³¹⁾ Mawdsley and Churchill proved very accommodating in their attitudes towards old age pensions, an eight hour day and an employers' liability bill⁽¹³²⁾, all trade unionists' demands, whilst in their replies to the local Protestant pressure groups on the Church Discipline issue they probably picked up a sizeable Anglican vote.⁽¹³³⁾ It may have seemed for a time during the campaign that the Conservatives could not fail to win. And yet they did. Although the Liberal candidates were less reforming

in character, one of them, Emmott, was a local industrialist whose influence may have proved a counter attraction to Mawdsley. Moreover, religious antagonism was not especially marked in Oldham and at the turn of the century it was one of the few Lancashire towns to have more of its children educated in Board Schools than in voluntary institutions.⁽¹³⁴⁾ 1899 may therefore be regarded as a more normal contest than that of 1895, when Tory influence was inflated by the cotton duties controversy, and the Liberals were able to attract their real following in the constituency.⁽¹³⁵⁾ Perhaps a surprising outcome was Mawdsley's inability to secure more votes in a predominantly working class constituency; his low number of "plumpers"(96) and the insufficient number of "split" votes between him and Emmott (257) suggest that the electorate did not take very seriously the "Con-Lab" nature of his candidature.⁽¹³⁶⁾ By 1899 labour politics in Lancashire were beginning to move in an independent direction and those electors interested enough to want working class candidates probably now demanded their being more representative of a working class organisation than Mawdsley appeared to be in this campaign. In the final analysis, therefore, the result was decided by traditional political loyalties.

The swing back to liberalism in some areas during the late nineties suggested a possible recovery for the party in Lancashire by the time of the next General Election. But this was not to be. None of the bye-elections reflected the growing concern over the political situation in South Africa which had been intensifying since February 1899 and which in October developed into war between Britain and the Boer Republics. In September and October 1900, after a series of British military successes,

the Government sprang a "Khaki" election.

The Liberal party was not prepared for a campaign fought along chauvinist lines. For one thing the party was disunited over the war and unable to lay down any clear policy for or against it, whilst the existence of "pro-Boers" as Liberal candidates in constituencies where the electorate was affected by imperialist feelings hardly bade fair for the polls. Another factor that seemed likely to inhibit the Liberals was the effect of the South African war on trade and the stimulus it gave particularly to the coal industry, whose prices soared. As a result, in 1900, there was none of the "backlash", compounded of economic depression and unemployment, against the incumbent government such as had hit the Liberal party in 1895. It appeared, therefore, that the Liberals were in a difficult position and yet in Lancashire their performance in 1900 was slightly better than that of five years before and the General Election was not an unmitigated disaster for them compared with previous efforts.

Of course it was not to be expected that the Liberal party would do well in traditionally hostile areas. Hence in Liverpool the Conservatives took six of the nine divisions without a contest whilst in the shipbuilding towns of Barrow-in-Furness and Birkenhead, where a strong foreign policy was usually an attractive issue, the Liberals likewise found it hopeless to put up candidates. Bury too, a town which supported an army barracks, saw the Conservatives strengthen their position. But in general the most marked characteristic of the campaign was the difference in the voting behaviour of the borough and county constituencies.⁽¹³⁷⁾ In the boroughs the Liberal position was with few exceptions always down on that of 1895

whilst in the county seats the party invariably made gains. The cause would seem to be in the degree of publicity over the war, there being generally far more propaganda put out by the newspapers and by the military authorities, in the form of parades, in the bigger towns than in the smaller manufacturing districts.⁽¹³⁸⁾ At Preston, for example, the I.L.P. candidate Keir Hardie was advised by a colleague that "it would be a sound political strategy from the outset not to speak too strongly against the war since there have been hundreds of casualties from Preston", and accordingly Hardie, an anti-war candidate, toned down his speeches, talking of the "bravery of our troops" and the "useless sacrifice of dozens and dozens of brave lads" through the mismanagement of the War Office.⁽¹³⁹⁾ Other socialist candidates also found the atmosphere of the bigger towns uncongenial.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ The county seats were less affected by the war, although even here there were exceptions, and the most notable one was Leigh, the only seat in Lancashire always to return a Liberal in the thirty years before 1914. In 1900 the Conservatives came close to winning. Caleb Wright had been succeeded in 1895 as M.P. by C.P. Scott, a strong social reformer but weak on foreign policy as his position as editor of the Manchester Guardian revealed. In 1900 Scott was singled out as the leading pro-Boer in Lancashire and at Leigh there was exhibited much antipathy towards him, his critical attacks on the Government's policy being sharply denounced by a good proportion of the electorate.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

The war issue did therefore assist the Conservative cause and help to check the signs of Liberal resurgence that had been manifested during the later 'nineties. It was perhaps to be expected that once the war was over the Liberal party would revive again in Lancashire. But could it hope to secure a majority of votes in the immediate future? The odds seemed to be against this happening since for almost a decade the party had been drifting without a set plan, not being able to decide between whether to offer a workers' programme of social reform or to concentrate on the old issues of popular radicalism such as Disestablishment, reform of the House of Lords and Home Rule. At the turn of the century some Lancashire Liberals were no doubt aware that their party needed to think deeply about its political future; Kay-Shuttleworth of Clitheroe, for example, expressed such feelings to one of the party chiefs, Campbell-Bannerman, in 1898: "whilst we do not want another Newcastle Programme we do seem to need two or three big objects besides the H(ouse) of Lords".⁽¹⁴²⁾ Clearly the "big objects" were required for electoral success and the most significant development in the Liberal party during the next few years was the manner in which its "big objects" were found - not by a solution of the Liberal party's real problems but because of Conservative policy in the few years before 1905. The Government's measures presented the Liberal with a series of issues that allowed them to stage a political revival based on working class support with once more all radical and Liberal forces united under one flag. The coincidence of such issues as free trade, Chinese labour, trade union legislation and education absolved the Liberals of the need to devise their own policy for working class support.

Between 1900 and 1905 the sample of bye-elections in Lancashire is rather meagre, but two contests, at Bury and Preston, serve to illustrate how the political situation was swinging in favour of the Liberals.⁽¹⁴³⁾ The Bury bye-election came in May 1902 on the retirement of James Kenyon, the Conservative M.P. The contest was dominated by the Corn Registration Duty which had recently been introduced by the Conservatives. This protectionist measure was commonly called "the Bread Tax" by Liberals and George Toulmin, their candidate at Bury used the symbols of the Big and Little Loaf, to show how interference with the principles of Free Trade increased the cost of living for workers.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ All other issues in the election were of secondary importance against the clash over Free Trade; the Conservative candidate⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ attempted to introduce the question of the Government's education policy, since in Bury there was no School Board and the local residents might have been thought strongly in line with the Government's voluntary principle.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ On the other hand the question of a reform of the picketing laws was particularly important for trade unionists and Toulmin received the support of David Holmes of the Weavers' Amalgamation after promising to champion this cause.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ The Irish voters in Bury also backed the Liberal because of his attitude towards Home Rule.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Toulmin, a Preston newspaper proprietor who had been defeated at Bury in 1900, was victorious by 414 votes; the election displayed in embryonic form all the issues which were to dominate politics in the next few years. Free trade however was shown to be of paramount importance in a working class constituency and as defenders of economic orthodoxy the Liberals reaped the benefits.

The importance of the newly formed Labour Representation Committee was revealed in the Preston bye-election of May 1903⁽¹⁴⁹⁾. The Liberals had never been strong in the town, whose Catholic population was now attracted to Conservative educational policy, with its support for voluntary schools. Yet the intervention of a Labour candidate clearly drew working class voters to the radical cause; John Hodge of the L.R.C. polled over 6,000 votes and though the seat was won with a majority of over 2,000 by John Kerr, an owner of the local engineering works, the L.R.C. vote was a significant improvement on previous Liberal campaigns in this two member constituency.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾

At the 1906 General Election the Liberal party made unprecedented gains in the Lancashire industrial region, falling from its 1900 position in only one borough, Wigan, where an unofficial Labour candidate split the radical vote. The Liberal appeal to the working man's vote was further strengthened by the presence of 16 L.R.C. candidates who stood against Conservatives without Liberal opposition, in areas where working class Toryism had been traditionally strong. In these areas the swings against Conservatism were often massive.(Table 17).

In the face of such obvious radical advantages the Conservatives had little chance of winning the working class vote. The Salisbury and Balfour Governments had failed to promise legislative immunity for trade unions against actions for tort concerning union officials. Moreover they had upheld the use of indentured Chinese labourers in the South African mines and British workers felt that the Boer War had therefore been fought to secure cheap labour for capitalists rather than ensure employment for

British emigrants. Most important, Joseph Chamberlain's decision to campaign for protection brought even the free traders in the Conservative party under the critical eye of the working class electorate.

The Conservatives were thus strictly limited in issues on which they could win votes; the middle class constituencies, notably Manchester South and Southport, were inclined to vote Liberal over Free Trade. In Merseyside, working class Conservatism proved more durable than that of the middle class for the relatively affluent Abercrombie division returned a Liberal, for the first time. The workers were still torn by the religious issue, in spite of the presence of two Labour candidates at Kirkdale and West Toxteth. Although Home Rule was not a prominent point in Liberal manifestoes the Conservatives stressed its possibility under a Liberal Government in order to whip up anti-Irish feeling and create enmity against the priests.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ So strong was this antagonism that at Birkenhead an Independent Protestant candidate secured over 2,000 votes which otherwise would probably have guaranteed a Conservative victory.

In other places where Conservative candidates were fighting for their political lives they tried to rally electors with cries of "the Church in danger". This was especially noticeable at Blackburn where Philip Snowden was elected with W H Hornby, a Tory Member since 1886, who charged his socialist opponent with atheism.⁽¹⁵²⁾ Only where the Irish immigrant minority had reached sizeable proportions did this bring many votes.⁽¹⁵³⁾

There was also a possibility that Catholic voters might forsake their Liberal allegiance in 1906 over the education question. Leading Catholic clergy had denounced any intentions the Liberal Government might

have of reversing the Act of 1902⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ and it was thought that this matter should lay more heavily on Catholic minds than the hope of Home Rule for Ireland. The polls, however, revealed a gulf between clergy and flock. The Irish voters seemed to have had little difficulty in choosing to support Home Rule, and therefore the Liberal party. There were two main reasons for this; firstly the advice of the Irish National League that Irishmen should vote Liberal or Labour,⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ and secondly the strong working class element in the Irish population which would have been drawn towards Liberal support for trade unions and, more especially, the policy of cheap food. As Michael Davitt, the Irish Nationalist speaker, pointed out, working class Irishmen should not be influenced by the actions of middle class English Catholics who were ingrained Tories.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾; thus an element of class conflict probably entered into the decision. Manchester Irishmen, for instance, were solidly Liberal in 1906⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ as were those in most other towns where an organised Irish party existed.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ The English Catholics at Preston may have given some support to the Conservatives, as may their co-religionists at St. Helens, where the influence of the clergy was on the Tory side.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ At Salford South Hilaire Belloc fought an interesting campaign; although the Conservatives warned "Don't Vote for a Frenchman and a Catholic".⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Belloc won many votes on his programme of social reform; he was, of course, a staunch Catholic:

"My religion is of greater moment to me by far than my politics, or than any other interest could be, and if I had to choose between two policies, one of which would certainly injure my religion and the other as certainly advance it, I would not for a moment hesitate between the two".⁽¹⁶²⁾

Strangely, however, Belloc chose to oppose the 1902 Education Act but supported Home Rule, "as dependent on elementary democratic principles" being a national and religious problem.⁽¹⁶³⁾ He won comfortably.

Tariff Reform, however, accounted for the loss of most Conservative votes and significantly many of the party's candidates in the region renounced Chamberlain's proposals.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾

4 Summary

In accounting for party fortunes during this period it can be seen that the Liberal party was at a greater disadvantage than the Conservatives for most of the time, being in danger more frequently of losing its natural support over controversial issues likely to divide its ranks. Such situations occurred regularly for the Liberals between 1885 and 1900; on the questions of Home Rule, Indian tariffs and the South African war the party became entangled with problems that had particular relevance to Lancashire, and liberalism slumped accordingly at the General Elections of 1886, 1895 and 1900 when these issues each predominated. From 1902 to 1906 the situation was to some extent reversed, as it was during these years that the Conservative party suffered the same kind of problem over the tariff reform issue, which had very little to commend it in Lancashire. Yet, whilst in the 1906 General Election the Conservative share of the vote dropped significantly in the region the Liberal share did not rise by the same degree. This was because the victory of that year was won in conjunction with the new Labour party, whose development during these years had been most noticeable in the industrial centres. The fact that in 1906 Labour candidates were successful in many of the individual towns previously held by the Conservatives pointed

to the most interesting development in Lancashire politics since 1885 - namely the ability of a party to win votes on a class basis.

Such a development may be rightly regarded as striking when it comes to summing up the characteristics of parliamentary politics in the region in the 'eighties and 'nineties. The most marked feature of the region is the complete absence of any correlation between social class and party loyalty; only in 1906 could one side in the political contest be regarded as the working man's party. At other times both the Conservative and Liberal parties had proved capable of winning working men's and middle class votes, though within fairly well defined geographical districts. In fact, geographical location appeared to be of more importance in deciding the political character of a constituency than did social and economic composition. An explanation of this tendency, discussed at greater length in the following chapter, lies in the paramount importance in Lancashire politics of the Irish immigrant, whose significance emerges repeatedly in the preceding survey of election campaigns. There was a noticeable increase in Conservative strength where Irish immigrant minorities reached sizeable proportions in the community, the process being most pronounced in the Liverpool area. On the otherhand, as the Irish factor declined in importance towards the eastern side of the region the relative strength of nonconformity assumed greater influence and Conservative voting became less marked.

We may conclude, therefore, that both the issues involved in the election campaigns and the social and religious features of the region made for the most striking aspect in Lancashire politics during this period -

the failure of what was generally reckoned by contemporaries to be the working man's party to win greater support in a most heavily industrialised region. It may be seen that when Ireland was an important issue at elections, as it was during the 1880's and early 'nineties, the Liberal chances of polling a majority of the votes were very remote. But after the General Election of 1892 there can be no doubt that Home Rule began to decline in significance as an electoral programme. How did this situation affect the Liberal party? It may be suggested that during the 1890's the Liberals had an opportunity to recover but that they were never really able to grasp it. That an opportunity was there can be seen by the nature of the issues discussed; practically all were of material importance and might have been thought of as affecting the voter's everyday life in some way. Issues of more remote importance rarely predominated; foreign affairs, for example, were only of significance during the late 1890's and of course, during the 1900 campaign, but in both cases their relevance was largely decided because of their connection with the export trade. Further, an abstract principle such as socialism was rarely attractive to the electorate, as may be seen from the disappointing performances of the I.L.P. candidates in 1895, and was only accepted later when its doctrines were tacked on to trade union programmes. If, therefore, practical issues were the most likely to bring success there was ample opportunity for the Liberal party to build a programme along these lines, especially concentrating on elements of social and economic reform such as an eight hour day, employers' liability, factory reform and liquor control. The evidence of bye-elections in the latter 1880's and early 1890's would point to the relevance of such issues.

Another factor was beginning to suggest some attention to the problem of re-grouping the basis of Liberal support. This was the noticeable tendency of the Irish Catholic voters to become less reliable Liberals as the prospect of a Home Rule bill faded. By the late 1890's the questions of an Irish Catholic university and voluntary schools were being espoused by the Conservative and the result was that both in 1900 and 1906 some Irish Catholic groups appear to have been influenced by Toryism. It would be unwise to overstress this point since the most solidly Irish Catholic constituency in the region, Liverpool Scotland, remained steadfastly Nationalist throughout the period, yet the party could not afford to lose any support in Lancashire and it may therefore appear surprising that Liberals did not exert themselves to stem the leakage. Some Liberal candidates, especially in 1892, did attempt to move in this direction by adopting programmes of radical social reform, but the party as a whole was divided over the "Newcastle Programme", many Liberals not wishing to consign the party to a socialistic stance; these people preferred Kay-Shuttleworth's "big issues" which would win elections without the need for transforming the party. But such issues could not easily be planned for; it was really not because of any Liberal designs that they arose in 1906. It therefore seemed that in the long term the Liberal party could hope for little success unless it resolved the problem of a middle class leadership bidding for working class support.

6.

Politics, Religion and Social Change

In the last chapter we looked at the response of electors to the immediate issues of politics and attempted to account for the variations in party support at the six General Elections between 1885 and 1906. It is now time to turn to the question of enduring political loyalty and the prospect of changes in voting behaviour.

The stability of political alignment over long periods of time has been the subject of several analyses of voting. One of the first studies to examine this feature was André Siegfried's survey of attitudes in western France during the time of the Third Republic. Siegfried was able to show that party preferences were shaped by broad environmental factors, such as social class, religion or occupation, as much as by political manifestoes; that, in fact, the social and economic background of a community goes far towards explaining its politics.⁽¹⁾ As a result of Siegfried's pioneer work the relationship between the electorate and its environment is now generally regarded as being a crucial factor in the forming of political attitudes. Recent historical studies of British politics in the years before the First World War have shown, for example, the marked connection between social class and party choice, especially in London,⁽²⁾ whilst the whole range of influences which make up political alignment have been investigated recently by Butler and Stokes.⁽³⁾ If some of these techniques are applied to the Lancashire industrial region at the end of the nineteenth century we may understand what accounted for its major political features.

1. The Bases of Politics

It has already been pointed out that variations in party support coincided less with class divisions than with geographical areas, the greatest strengths of Conservatism clearly being in the west of the region whilst the Liberal party drew its more reliable support from the constituencies on the eastern side of Lancashire. The absence of any strong tendency for voting along class lines is confirmed by the fact that in the four predominantly middle class constituencies of the region (4) the average Liberal vote between 1885 and 1900 was 46.5 per cent whilst, during the same period, in the 38 mainly working class divisions it was also under 50 per cent. In the 1906 General Election the Liberal share of the vote in both these categories rose to 58 and 56.3 per cent respectively.

Nor does occupation appear to have been a significant influence on voting. In areas with a high concentration of workers in a single industry, as for example closely knit communities of miners and cottonworkers, there was no greater uniformity of behaviour than among a labour force of less homogeneous character. (5)

On the other hand, a clear pattern emerges when the religious environment is analysed. There is a marked association between the influence of Roman Catholicism in Lancashire and the strength of the Conservative vote, the western districts of the region being precisely those where Catholic support was strongest. Conversely, the more eastern parts of the region were less influenced by Catholicism and were consequently less prone to Conservative voting, the Liberal party being able here to poll

more favourably.⁽⁶⁾ In order to understand this relationship it is necessary to examine the development of the various religious denominations during the later half of the nineteenth century.

2. The Irish and Catholicism

In the third quarter of the century the support for the Catholic Church among working people in Lancashire was swelling. Catholicism received its initial boost from the Irish immigrants who flooded into Lancashire after the Great Famine in Ireland during the 1840's.⁽⁷⁾ Their main port of entry was Liverpool and its hinterland provided a ready market for unskilled labour in the cotton mills, coalmines, chemical works, docks, labouring trades and, for the women, in domestic service. The Irish were not completely new to Lancashire for in pre-famine days there had been a steady flow across the Irish Sea; in 1825 there was said to be close on 100,000 Irishmen in Lancashire, concentrated mainly in Manchester and Liverpool.⁽⁸⁾ But in spite of their familiarity and their easy absorption by industry the Irish remained racially and religiously distinct. For many years they lived in ghettos such as the one in Manchester known as "Little Ireland" - a slum district just to the south of the city centre.⁽⁹⁾ Their religion set them apart also and was responsible for evoking strong dislike on the part of the indigenous population, who were competing with the Irish for jobs. In 1868, for example, extensive "no Popery" rioting took place throughout south-east Lancashire, though one suspects its causes were as much economic as religious.⁽¹⁰⁾ Against this kind of hostility the Irish people united; Catholic trade unions, possibly Irish organisations,

were not unknown in later years⁽¹¹⁾ and the Irish Nationalist movement, vigorous in Liverpool and Manchester, thrived on the sense of a separate race.⁽¹²⁾

It seems clear that the influx of the Irish began to level out during the 1880's and thereafter the proportion of Irish people in the Lancashire population was probably falling. Estimates of the Irish population can be no more than rough guides, since the official censal returns deal only with those people born in Ireland; nevertheless by the turn of the century there were still over 108,000 Irish born people living in the principal manufacturing towns of the region.⁽¹³⁾ During the 1890's men and women of Irish stock probably numbered about half a million, with about a third of these at Liverpool. The two neighbouring towns of Bootle and Widnes also had a high concentration of Irish, probably accounting for half the population. At Manchester there was a sizeable community in the north of the city, especially in St. Michael's Ward, whilst Irish people were also prominent in the new industrial centres of St Helens, Barrow and Horwich.⁽¹⁴⁾

Two qualifications should be made about the connection between Irish and Catholic at this time. Firstly, not all the Irishmen in Lancashire were Catholics; undoubtedly some would have been Ulstermen and therefore Protestants. It is extremely difficult to estimate the number and location of these people but it may be assumed that they constituted a minority in the shipbuilding towns of Barrow and Birkenhead where skills learnt in the Belfast shipyards could be applied. Most of the major towns had their Orange lodges, though exactly how much support they enjoyed it is difficult to say, whilst at Liverpool there was a noisy minority of Ulstermen in local politics.⁽¹⁵⁾ Secondly, not all the Catholics in Lancashire were Irishmen.

It must be remembered that Lancashire was a region of comparatively strong native Catholicism, and for centuries it had been markedly more Roman Catholic than the rest of England. In the 1770's, for example, there was said to be 14,000 communicants in the county, as against 1,500 in Yorkshire.⁽¹⁶⁾ By the late 1780's the figure for Lancashire had apparently risen to 23,000.⁽¹⁷⁾ The principal area of English Catholicism was Preston and its neighbourhood and the concentration of Catholics in the town may be judged from a note sent out by an Independent congregation in 1828 to solicit help in the building of a chapel:

"Preston, in the County of Lancaster, is a corporate town containing, by the census of 1821, about 25,000 inhabitants; since that period the population has increased to upwards of 30,000. Of this number about one third consists of Roman Catholics." (18)

The Irish writer John Denvir estimated that in the early 1890's most of Preston's 30,000 Catholics were Englishmen.⁽¹⁹⁾

By the end of the nineteenth century, then, the Catholic population of Lancashire had reached greater proportions and covered a wider social range than in any other region of the country.⁽²⁰⁾ The result was a significant strengthening in the influence of the Catholic Church. In general, church-going among the Catholic working class was far more marked than among indigenous Protestant workers. Irish had, in all likelihood, been accustomed to attending church services in their native land and if the habit could be encouraged in England, and if more accommodation in Catholic churches could be provided, it was reasonable to suppose that attendance at worship would be good. When the Roman Catholic hierarchy was re-established in England in 1850, two bishops were assigned to the industrial population of

Lancashire - one at Liverpool ⁽²¹⁾ and one at Salford. They soon discovered, in fact, that attendance was by no means automatic; that one of the most serious problems for the Catholic Church was "leakage" or loss of followers. There was a variety of reasons for this, but three stand out: the poor distribution of churches, which meant that attendance at mass often meant a long walk: the fact that female domestic servants were sometimes unable to secure release from their employers to make the morning journey to church ⁽²²⁾; and, a more profound problem, the uneven sex ratio among the immigrants, there being initially far more single men than women and this caused a mixing of the Catholic and Protestant religions by marriage, normally diluting the ardour of the Catholic faith and often eradicating it altogether. ⁽²³⁾

The response of the clergy was to create more facilities for worship and for education. This was especially so in the poorer districts; Manning, the second Archbishop of Westminster, was convinced of the need for more Catholic schools and spent a great deal of money in attempting to provide them in order to maintain the allegiance of the poorer children. ⁽²⁴⁾ This process was established in the diocese of Salford by Bishop Turner: "there is perhaps no diocese in England better provided in respect to its parochial schools", recorded Turner's successor, Herbert Vaughan. ⁽²⁵⁾ Nonetheless, when Vaughan became Bishop in 1872 the problem of leakage was still acute and his most pressing need was money, for the Salford diocese was not so well endowed with wealthy middle class patrons as was the more affluent diocese of Liverpool. By appealing for donations, however, Vaughan was able

to open a seminary for the training of secular clergy ⁽²⁶⁾ and this enabled him to tackle the problem of providing teachers. As a result of a census, conducted in 1885, it was calculated that almost 10,000 children were in danger of losing their faith, mainly because of parental neglect and consequently a Catholic Protection and Rescue Society was set up to investigate individual cases. ⁽²⁷⁾ Demands on the clergy were increased in order to realise Vaughan's maxim that "a house-going priest makes a church-going people". ⁽²⁸⁾ By the end of his episcopacy in 1892 Vaughan had more than doubled the number of teachers in his area and, though faced with a continual debt, created many new parishes with new churches in the industrial districts of east Lancashire. ⁽²⁹⁾ In the diocese of Liverpool the same process was taking place under the direction of Bishop O'Reilly and, later, Bishop Whiteside ⁽³⁰⁾ By the end of the century the Catholics in Lancashire were a vigorous minority religious movement and their efforts to maintain a following had produced an important reaction from the Protestant churches.

3. The Protestant Response

The influence of the Protestant denominations among the population at large was by no means extensive. ⁽³¹⁾ Both the Established Church and Nonconformity were making attempts after the 1851 religious census to increase their support and in comparative terms, as Map 7 shows, the combined nonconformist sects were clearly enjoying the better of the struggle, especially in the eastern parts of the region.

Yet the Church of England was not reduced to insignificance. Not only did its leaders respond to the 1851 census vigorously, by attempting to provide more church accommodation, but the Church was able to draw on a latent nationalist, Protestant feeling among the working class in districts where the Catholic Church was influential. To some extent, therefore, the Church was blessed with favourable conditions in which to operate because of the Irish immigration and it came to acquire a genuinely popular, evangelical character in Lancashire. The tone of the Church of England in the region was set by Bishop Fraser during his episcopacy at Manchester from 1870 to 1885, during which time he took the lead in making the Anglican faith attractive to working people. He not only reduced the emphasis on ritual with the aim of making services intelligible to the working man⁽³²⁾ but adopted a sympathetic attitude towards trade unionism and labour politics whilst at the same time stressing the social side of the Church's role in working class communities.⁽³³⁾ In addition, by means of voluntary contributions and endowments, Fraser was able to accomplish an astonishing programme of church building: during his fifteen years in office 105 new churches were built by the Anglicans in Lancashire at a cost of £650,000 and a further £214,000 was channelled into the re-building of older churches.⁽³⁴⁾ "A broad ecclesiasticism had a mighty revival under the reign of Dr Fraser".⁽³⁵⁾

Like their Catholic counterparts the Anglican bishops devoted much of their energy to education. Fraser was a keen educationalist and determined to prevent too many schoolchildren from falling under the influence of the School Boards that had been established following the 1870 Education Act.

Believing that "parents prefer education (to be) religious"⁽³⁶⁾ Fraser established a Board of Education in his diocese and the Anglicans made impressive strides in the provision of schools. By the turn of the century, when E A Knox became Bishop of Manchester, he was able to observe in Lancashire "a love of elementary schools something analogous to the patriotism of Public Schools, the force of which only residence in Lancashire could reveal."⁽³⁷⁾ There had developed, in effect, something of a denominational race during the later years of the century in the provision of school places. In general the leadership of the dissenting sects had, in the mid-century, opposed the idea of denominational education and made no attempts to compete with the state-aided Anglican schools, conceding the formula that the best grounds for co-operation in national education were the doctrines of the Established Church. By 1870, Nonconformity had come to favour a more undenominational approach, however, and its leaders were consequently angered by the 1870 Education Act's continuance of Church schools. They therefore set to work, through the School Boards and through their own schools, to extend their own precepts in education.⁽³⁸⁾ The resulting rivalry, intensified by the presence of the Catholics, meant that the voluntary principle in education became very strong; by 1900, for example, there were more towns in the Lancashire region than in any other part of the country which did not possess a School Board, and there were only three major towns in the region where attendances at Board schools exceeded those at voluntary establishments.⁽³⁹⁾ The influence of these schools in providing an education that determined social and political attitudes was probably equally as important a factor in the political scene as the more direct religious influence derived from regular attendance

at worship.

4. The Politics of Religion

Lancashire's Toryism in the later nineteenth century was compounded of immigration and religion. It was a nationalistic response by indigenous workers to the presence of easily identifiable groups of Irish immigrants, competing for employment and set apart by their Catholic faith. The most convenient expressions of anti-Irish feeling were the Conservative party and the Anglican Church and hence both enjoyed a degree of popular support in Lancashire that had little to do with their intrinsic value for the working man. Toryism did not necessarily rely upon an active religious involvement and the strength of Conservative voting was always greater than the figures for Anglican worship would suggest.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The working class Tory ethos was, so to speak, based more on "anti-religion" than on "pro-religion". For example, this feature was observed by Bishop Fraser in Blackburn, a town of strong Toryism: ".... the alliance between Conservatism and the Church, religion not having much to do with the compact, is closer than in almost any other Lancashire town."⁽⁴¹⁾

The reasons why Conservatism should have been regarded as the haven for the nationalist vote are varied but not difficult to appreciate. For one thing, the Conservative party has always placed itself in the mainstream of British social and political life, defending the established order of things against radicals and socialists but accepting change if, after careful consideration, it has been shown to be necessary.⁽⁴²⁾ This attitude was especially noticeable among Tory M.P.s in Lancashire during the later nineteenth century; the Liberal party might be referred to as a bunch of "wirepullers", or as a sectarian band of "atheists, secularists,

Unitarians, communists and Charterists" ⁽⁴³⁾ whilst the Conservative party was portrayed ^{as} the guardian of national interests. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ In one respect the Conservatives benefited in Lancashire by these attitudes; this was because they defended the Established Church against the Liberal party, which during the nineteenth century had been associated with a disestablishment campaign though by the 1890's this had been toned down to Welsh Disestablishment only. ⁽⁴⁵⁾ But defence of the Established Church meant defending Anglicanism against Catholicism and it brought the Tories much popular support. In Liverpool, for example, where these issues were stretched almost to the point of exaggeration, the backbone of Archibald Salvidge's Conservative Working Men's Association was the defence of Church and State ⁽⁴⁶⁾; when in the later 1890's, during the time of the Church Discipline controversy, the Tory party appeared not to be defending established values, but to be conniving at Anglo-Catholicism, the Liverpool working class Tories evinced considerable pleasure at the defeat of Conservative candidates in bye-elections. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ In general, however, Conservative election manifestoes did stress their concern for the Church and for religious education. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

The Tory position as the Anglican party was clarified because of the obvious association of the Liberals with nonconformity. But more significant still, probably, was the fact that during the late 'eighties and the early 'nineties, when the Home Rule question was being discussed, the Irish voters came to be linked in the popular imagination with the Liberal party. As we have seen, this was a fair assumption to make; without analysis in depth of particular constituencies it is very difficult to say with any certainty which way the Irish vote went and whether it was changing.

As we saw in Chapter 5 there are numerous references to its being mainly Liberal, and the constituency with the highest proportion of Irish votes - the only one where they constituted a majority - remained Nationalist right through this period, thereby remaining closer in spirit to Liberalism than to Toryism. In reality, however, it is quite likely that the Irish voter was subjected to complex social pressures. For one thing the Catholic bishops of Liverpool were inclined to Conservatism over the question of religious education and as the Education Act of 1902 showed the Tory party was a firmer supporter of the voluntary principle.⁽⁴⁹⁾ It is possible that in the early twentieth century, when the question of education was more prominent in politics, some Catholic influences may have been at work to produce Tory voting.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Similarly the Irish were striving for acceptance by English society, few of them fostering the hope of returning to Ireland⁽⁵¹⁾ and a vote for Conservatism may have implied a belief in cautious progress. Moreover, the Irish came under the direct influence of the public house, which often acted as social centre and money-lending place for the new immigrant; landlords were hardly likely to be anything but Tory whilst the Liberal party championed local veto. Finally, it should be pointed out that the Irish vote was probably difficult to organise and that the proportion of Irishmen qualified to vote was never as high as that of the population in general⁽⁵²⁾, the result being that Irish votes were not polled very consistently for either party. But most of the evidence suggests that overall the Irish communities were more Liberal than Tory and that this loyalty was not changing very much during our period.

The relationship between religion and politics took on a different character as far as the Liberal party was concerned. Whereas Toryism thrived on the sense of social conflict Liberalism relied far more on active religious commitment; it needed "pro-religion" and the marked lack of support for the churches among the working class was clearly to weigh heavily on the party's electoral prospects.

Although in relation to other denominations the combined strength of the nonconformist sects was everywhere predominant⁽⁵³⁾ it may be questioned whether this support sprang from the working class. The danger of nonconformity's becoming a middle class religion may be seen in London, for example, where the process of class segregation by residence was becoming quite marked towards the end of the nineteenth century; the breaking of the social bond meant that in working class districts nonconformity was at a discount without the leadership of middle class people and consequently the Liberal party began to lose political influence in such areas.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The same process was discernable in the conurbation of Manchester and in 1900 a Methodist writer was connecting the decline of Liberalism in the city to the migration of the middle classes to more pleasant suburbs, leaving the chapels in the working class areas without financial support.⁽⁵⁵⁾ By 1895 the Methodist Times had noted that the city seemed "to be completely under the thumb of liquor and clericalism".⁽⁵⁶⁾

In the smaller cotton manufacturing towns north of Manchester the nonconformist sects were closer to the mass of the people and the religious influence often played an important part in shaping the political life of the community.⁽⁵⁷⁾ An observer at Bacup in 1883 noted, for example, that

"Each chapel is a self-governing community regulating not only chapel matters but overlooking the private life of its members", (58)

whilst there were two purely working class religious groups in this area - the Independent Methodists, a strongly evangelical body with its centre at Nelson and Colne, and the Methodist Unitarian movement at Todmorden on the Yorkshire border.⁽⁵⁹⁾ The concern of such sects for "the drink" question, and their natural animus against the Established Church, gave them a strong affinity for Liberalism. It was in the constituencies of Clitheroe and Rossendale that the Liberal party drew some of its most consistent and loyal support during this period, and even when the Labour Representation Committee took the Clitheroe seat in 1902 it did so by falling into line with the traditional values of the district and by adopting as parliamentary candidate a man with pronounced nonconformist and radical sympathies.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Nevertheless, north east Lancashire was probably exceptional in having such a strong nonconformist character and it is most unlikely that in any other area of the region the connection between an active religion and Liberal politics could have been so marked.

In the absence of reliable statistics of religious worship it is, of course, unwise to make dogmatic claims. It may be suggested, however, that nonconformity had become very much a middle class religion in many parts of Lancashire. This was especially noticeable where there was a keen

Protestant and Catholic struggle ; in places like Blackburn, Preston, Wigan and Liverpool the dominant nonconformist sect was not a working class one but Congregationalism, a typically middle class church whose wealthy patrons provided the money for the chapel building that helped nonconformity keep pace with the Anglicans and Catholics.⁽⁶¹⁾ A further point, linked to this, is the lack of attention given by leading nonconformist ministers to questions of economic and social importance that touched on working class life. The Baptists, for example, were especially quietist; their most prominent pastors during the later years of the century - Charles Williams of Accrington, Overend of Bacup and McLaren of Manchester - were all keen evangelicals and often brilliant orators but seemed to be little interested in politics or social questions. Charles Williams, for example, made the theme of his address to the Baptist Union in 1886 "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"⁽⁶²⁾ yet it was probably a colleague of his at Bacup who had reported in 1883 that there was "a growing desire among the congregation to have political and social subjects treated in the pulpit", adding that it was "very difficult for a minister to please".⁽⁶³⁾ On a political level the Liberal party still carried its old nonconformist causes of Disestablishment and Liquor Control into the 1890's though, as was seen, they had little appeal to a working class electorate.

On the other hand it would be misleading to suggest that the gap between nonconformity and the working class implied serious dangers for the Liberals in the short term. Three factors probably helped to keep matters in proportion. Firstly, the middle class was in any case better represented at the polls than working men and therefore nonconformity was

probably disproportionately influential when it came to voting for Liberal candidates.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Secondly, the challenge to nonconformist and Liberal loyalties from specifically working class organisations such as trade unions was developing only slowly and was limited in its effect. In the third place, as long as the traditional social fabric remained intact working people would be well disposed to accept the leadership, in religion and in politics, of middle class people. It was only when these developments had reached a significant stage - when a wider franchise had been adopted, when Labour politics was capable of creating its own loyalties and when economic depression caused a break up of the Victorian social structure - that the political future of Liberalism seemed uncertain, and none of these influences were at all strong at the end of the nineteenth century.

5. Social Leadership and Social Change

In addition to the religious factor in Lancashire politics at this time another element must be taken into consideration for its importance in shaping the political make-up of the region. It is now time to pay some attention to the relationship between the region's social structure and the style of politics at the close of the nineteenth century; to examine the markedly paternalist character of politics.

Given the particular economic and social features of Lancashire, outlined in Chapter One, it was natural that exponential roles should fall to a certain group of people. The natural leaders of society came to be the eminent industrialists, and to a lesser extent, the landlords to whom working people looked for employment and economic prosperity. In an economy

that depended on individual enterprise these were the people who had risen to the very top of the social pyramid by virtue of their skill and expertise in business and who were generally reckoned to be responsible for the economic strength of the region. Almost every town had its influential entrepreneurs, resident in the district and with long standing local roots. In the manufacturing towns they were the owners of mills, collieries, chemical factories or ironworks: the Pilkingtons of St Helens, for example, or the Dugdales and Hornbys of Blackburn; William Mather of Salford and W H Lever of Birkenhead; Wade Deacon and the Hutchinsons of Widnes; the Grant Brothers of Ramsbottom; Colonel Blundell of Ince. The list is almost endless. In the rural districts that were still basically agricultural local landowners occupied much the same position, either as solid country gentlemen like the Feildens of Feniscowles, near Blackburn, or as mighty territorial magnates such as the Lindsay family, lords of Crawford and Balcarres, and the Stanleys, Earls of Derby.⁽⁶⁵⁾

These local families were true social leaders, recognising clearly defined obligations which caused them to put as much back into their communities in the form of churches, schools, libraries and clubs as they took out through business profits. It was commonly said of the local entrepreneurs of Glossop in Derbyshire that "each of them built a mill, a church and a school."⁽⁶⁶⁾ In Lancashire the munificence of this class was everywhere evident; it ranged from the provision of model housing estates for workers such as that laid down at Port Sunlight by Lever Brothers, to the building of libraries and the sponsoring of festivities such as cricket and football matches.⁽⁶⁷⁾ The local entrepreneurs in fact performed

the function of welfare institutions, cushioning their communities against adversity in the days before such services were provided by the state.

Although this form of paternalism was attacked by the emergent socialist groups during the 'eighties and 'nineties as part of their general assault on the economic bases of society, there is no reason to believe that it incurred any widespread hostility from the vast majority of working people. In fact it has been said of H W Schneider, the Barrow-in-Furness industrialist, that he was "the subject of not a little hero-worship", whilst his colleague and rival James Ramsden was "lionised almost inordinately" in the same town.⁽⁶⁸⁾ In Blackburn W H Hornby of the local cotton family was "th'owd gam cock" to the town's working people.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Paternalism clearly played an important role in the region's politics. It was a short step for the industrialist to make from social to political leadership. By far the majority of the MPs of both political parties in Lancashire was drawn from this group.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Paternalism was not the special preserve of any one party and the suggestion that Lancashire's working class Toryism was a manifestation of class conflict - the workers voting against the party of their employers - would not seem to be borne out.⁽⁷¹⁾ For both Conservative and Liberal organisations the social leader made an ideal parliamentary candidate. For one thing he was in a position to subsidise the local party by digging deeply into his own pockets to provide electoral expenses.⁽⁷²⁾ At Blackburn, for example, it was reckoned that

the Hornbys had spent more than £30,000 for the local Tory party during the early 1880s.⁽⁷³⁾ During the 1885 parliamentary election at Wigan one of the town's newspapers credited the Tory victory to "the strength of capitalists available."⁽⁷⁴⁾ Moreover, it was suggested that an industrialist MP was in the best position to gauge an industrial constituency's best interests and this was why local entrepreneurs were much better placed for winning votes in Lancashire than outsiders who knew little of the region's problems. For instance, the ability to keep a local economy buoyant by providing orders and therefore employment often played a significant part in elections; an I.L.P. report on Barrow-in-Furness concluded that

"no candidate who disavowed a war policy or who could not hold hopes of influencing Admiralty or other orders to the shipyards could have a shadow of a chance" (75)

Hence the seat was held by the Liverpool shipowner Cayzer between 1892 and 1906.⁽⁷⁶⁾ Electoral propaganda also tended to define an outsider as a person who was not resident in the town, sometimes with strange consequences. At St Helens in 1885, for example, both candidates were really local men - Seton Karr the Conservative, who was connected with the Pilkington glass firm and was also a director of a local brewery, and David Gamble, an industrialist who actually lived in St Helens and was a well known local Liberal. But since Seton Karr originated from Scotland the Liberal party posters emphatically pressed the point:

"..... David is our townsman good
And has employed the many;
Karr loves us, as he hates the devil
And never employed any
Sir Seton we'll 'sen bock' to Scotland
To hunt up a fresh policy." (77)

During the later nineteenth century most Lancashire MPs were in fact men with some local connections; "carpet-baggers" were definitely at a disadvantage when it came to electioneering.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Hence the deference accorded to a social elite in politics strictly limited active involvement to a small social group who exerted a strong influence over party policy and attitudes.

However, changing economic patterns were beginning to change the style of politics. Paternalism was a feature of a prosperous economy in which industrial and territorial magnates could justifiably be regarded as the bringers of prosperity. Yet towards the end of the nineteenth century there were signs that the days of the local entrepreneur were numbered. In the first place the re-organisation of businesses meant that the boss who owned his factory and controlled his capital was being replaced by the professional manager who was less likely to conceive of his role in terms of old-style social leadership. The amalgamation of businesses might bring what had hitherto been a purely local enterprise within the framework of a company with a much wider interest. It should not be suggested that such changes were very widespread in Lancashire before the First World War, but in places affected by economic adversity these developments were clear. In the coalfield, for example, most of the production was in the hands of large scale combines by 1900 and the colliery owners were no longer local persons.⁽⁷⁹⁾ Widnes and Barrow-in-Furness were two other places where the the later nineteenth century was a time of adversity when locally established firms had to accept the loss of their identity in larger combines in order to keep going. The biggest employer of labour in Widnes during the 'nineties was the United Alkali Company, whilst at Barrow the shipyards were taken over

in the mid 1890s by the national company of Vickers.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Economic rationalisation was therefore bound to have a profound effect on social leadership since workers could not take their cue in politics from an employer who did not participate directly in local social or political life.

In addition to amalgamation was the effect of migration. The old practice of building one's house near the factory or mill was gradually dying out as the attractions of pleasanter suburbs loomed larger. This was less true of the cotton manufacturing towns, which were surrounded by Pennine countryside, than of south Lancashire and north Cheshire; here the entrepreneurs had begun to move to the pleasanter districts of Cheshire as the conurbations of Manchester and Liverpool expanded,⁽⁸¹⁾ improved transport rendering the journey more practicable. It was unlikely that anybody who could afford to travel would choose to reside in the chemical towns of south Lancashire, for example; as T C Edwards-Moss, the first MP for Widnes, noted of the town: "....those who have business there take care to reside elsewhere. There are Stygian streams everywhere and there is no doubt that the smoke from the chimneys of Widnes kills all the country round about."⁽⁸²⁾

To be sure, the loss of social leaders was not felt on a widespread scale until the depression of the Inter-War years when it was seen that individual entrepreneurs were quite unable to provide solutions to the economic problems of the day. But even before 1914 the signs were evident that the style of political life was changing. Against the slow decline of social leadership was set the challenge of new movements - trade unionism, socialism and the independent labour ethos - designed to capture the loyalties of working class people.

6. Summary

Lancashire politics at the end of the nineteenth century were very different from those of today; religious conflict rather than economic questions determined party alignment, whilst the tone of politics was set by "social leaders" rather than "public persons"⁽⁸³⁾ and this gave rise to an atmosphere of deference. For working people politics was not a question of principles but rather an opportunity for confirming their faith in the established economic and social order.

But how far had the nature of politics changed by 1906? On the surface things appeared to have changed little since the 1880's. The religious element was not significantly less and, despite one or two exceptions, the social leaders were still pre-eminent in politics. In truth it would be an overstatement to say that the 1906 General Election marked a profound change in the politics of Lancashire. And yet, beneath the surface, it is possible to discern subtle modifications. Firstly, so far as the party balance is concerned, there are signs that the grip of Toryism, if not fatally weakened, was weakening. It is clear that the Conservative party could not have established its superiority since 1885 simply on the religious issue. There were too few constituencies in which the antagonism between Catholic and Protestant could produce a reactionary Toryism sufficient to carry the region for the Conservatives over a 20 year period. The balance was tipped in the Conservatives' favour by the poor challenge offered from the Liberal party; Liberal difficulties allowed their rivals to hold their own in a working class electorate until issues favourable to a working class party arose. This happened in 1906 when,

it must be stressed, there was a vastly increased electorate - more people voting than ever before, many of them for the first time⁽⁸⁴⁾ - with voters provided with adequate reasons for casting their vote against the Tories.⁽⁸⁵⁾ Another feature of 1906 was the presence of the Labour party, with its avowed support for a working class cause, which was challenging not only the Tories but also the Liberals for the right to represent working men in industrial constituencies. Moreover, the whole concept of an independent Labour party was a direct rejection of old-style politics: the emphasis was now on political leadership by employees, not by employers. If the conditions of the 1906 could be maintained in the future there was a possibility that the nature of politics in Lancashire would change profoundly.

Economic and social change did seem to favour Labour's progress. Irish immigration had been on the decline since the 1880's and sooner or later Catholic and Protestant antagonism would lose its force as the immigrant communities were assimilated into the working class community as a whole. If the mid-Victorian economy continued to undergo re-adjustment because of foreign competition the demise of the traditional family firms was very likely and with them the disappearance of the local paternalist entrepreneur. But in 1906 much of this seemed very much in the distance. Even if it did happen it could not be assumed that Labour was assured of automatic growth through working class electors quitting their old allegiances and gravitating towards their "natural" ground; the onus would be on the Labour party to convert by vigorous propaganda and hard working in the localities.⁽⁸⁶⁾ Significant political change does not reveal itself overnight.

PART TWO

BEGINNINGS: THE ORIGINS OF INDEPENDENCE.

Between the General Elections of 1885 and 1895 there were three significant spheres in Lancashire working class politics: i) the various moves to attain political influence at local level through the support by Trades Councils of candidates in elections to local authorities, such as town councils, school boards and boards of Poor Law Guardians; ii) the endeavours of the big trade unions of miners and cotton operatives in the pursuit of a political programme designed to supplement their industrial activity; and iii) the attempts of the two socialist parties - the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party - to foster a working class political consciousness and create an independent party based either on socialist or labour lines.

During these years, then, there were three different levels of activity of a disparate nature, with little attempt to unite forces. Labour representation of the kind sponsored by Trades Councils took its cue from local motives and therefore tended to be very parochial in outlook, lacking in general direction; it could not become the basis of a cohesive movement that would change the British political scene in any significant way. (Chapter 7)

Trade Union political action was more broadly based and succeeded in bringing about a fair degree of unity among the workers in the cotton and mining areas, who were able to give it a solid backing. Yet it was not guided by any general political philosophy and was certainly not designed to create an independent working class party. (Chapter 8) This left the socialists as the only group interested in

the formation of a political organisation that would bring together all working class activity, both local and regional, and have an impact on the national political structure. The socialists appreciated the value of using the trade unions as institutional bases to build a working class movement around whilst at the same time equipping it with a socialist philosophy. But since the socialist parties were small and initially received little support, their task was an uphill one (Chapter 9)

In all, therefore, the period under discussion exhibits a considerable amount of energy in working class politics, but because of the difficulty in bringing together resources among groups with different aims and methods it proved almost impossible to work towards a common goal; in the creation of a strong, independent tradition the period is disappointing yet the seeds of independence are nevertheless discernable.

LOCAL LABOUR REPRESENTATION

At the beginning of this period there were few signs that Lancashire would become a stronghold for the Labour party at the turn of the century. Quite simply, none of the political groups operating in the region at the time of the Third Reform Act entertained the idea of creating an independent party based on working class votes. Nor do the few years following show many signs that progress was being made in this direction. Two reasons may be advanced for the laggardly pace of working class political development in Lancashire at this time; firstly, the influence of socialism was very weak in the mid 'eighties and secondly the political divisions among trade unionists were so intense that political action on the part of the unions became very difficult. The only socialist party in existence in Lancashire during this time was the S.D.F. and most of its work was concerned with keeping its own branches buoyant; not until around 1890 did the S.D.F. begin to exercise some influence on other sections of the labour movement. In any case, in the 1880's, the S.D.F. was not so much interested in developing a workers' parliamentary party as in spreading the gospel of socialism among the masses. Political divisions among the workers were probably a more decisive factor in preventing labour representation; the situation might have been substantially different without this conflict between Tory and Liberal. In other regions there was no such cleavage, for radicalism was the workers' creed and the trade unions were able to achieve labour representation under

the wing of the Liberal party. Such a liaison was already perfected in the Northumberland and Durham coalfield and, to a lesser extent, among the miners of Yorkshire and the Rhondda Valley. Lancashire possessed trade unions equally as strong as those in other regions but in the later 'eighties both cotton and mining unions in Lancashire were beginning to make valuable industrial gains which no union leader wanted to jeopardise by arousing political dissensions in the rank and file.

It would therefore be true to say that before the increased labour activity of the early 1890's Lancashire contributed nothing very significant to the independent labour movement. Yet the period was not without some signs of an awakening spirit. A few attempts were made at local level to secure labour representation, first in parliament, through the General Election of 1885, and then in local authorities. Without claiming too much for these movements, almost all of which failed to achieve their own limited objectives, it is worth investigating them more closely in order to appreciate the feelings and opinions current in working class political attitudes at this time.

1. The General Election of 1885

Two campaigns to place working men in Parliament come to light during the course of electioneering in 1885. The first involved a genuine workers' candidate, Thomas Birtwistle, secretary of the Weavers' Amalgamation, running for the Conservative nomination at Burnley. Birtwistle's campaign is interesting because it represents one of the very few attempts to promote a Conservative Labour candidate, an animal rarely seen even in Lancashire, with its

preponderance of working class Toryism. Because the Tory ethos precluded the idea of labour representation Birtwistle found it difficult to have his scheme accepted by the Burnley Conservatives and his campaign failed to get off the ground even though in many respects he was an ideal candidate - prominent Tory, well respected union official who had served the Weavers since the 1860's and a member of the Royal Commission on Trade Depression. Birtwistle also enhanced his position by receiving support from his radical colleague David Holmes ⁽¹⁾ although this action in itself provoked a reaction among some sections of the local workforce. The campaign was attacked by Liberal workers for Birtwistle's having appeared on Tory platforms with alleged enemies of trade unionism and some societies affiliated to the Weavers' Amalgamation threatened to withhold their financial subscriptions unless Birtwistle renounced his position; ⁽²⁾ clearly his trade union fame was insufficient to break down political partisanship and Birtwistle did withdraw from the list of Conservative nominees. It seemed that trade unionists' fears about political activity were not without foundation.

The other parliamentary campaign also outlined sharply the difficulties attending labour representation. This was the Blackburn contest, where J. N. Boothman stood as Labour candidate. The impetus here came from working class radicalism but the Blackburn campaign illustrated the extent to which this creed, once active in Lancashire, had declined. In the later 1860's the National Reform League, a working class radical organisation, had a strong network of branches in the region ⁽³⁾ and at Manchester in the General Election of 1868 the old Chartist, Ernest Jones, had polled ten thousand votes.

Much of this fervour had evaporated during the 1870's, however, and the Liberal party came to rely excessively on national issues to bring working people to the polls, neglecting ward and constituency work; 1885 found the party badly organised in the working class districts of the larger towns. Nor did the Liberals capitalise on the support they did receive; for instance, one of the strongest centres of working class radicalism was the Manchester and Salford Trades Council which was dominated by skilled unionists in the workshop trades such as book binding, printing and tailoring. Their position had been established in the years between the exodus of the cotton trade from the city in the 1850's and the rise of the new unions, whose influence in the Trades Council was not fully felt before the turn of the century. (4) During these years radical workers like G. D. Kelley of the Lithograph. Printers controlled the Council and under the inspiration of another such man, Henry Slatter of the Typographical Association, a Representation Association was established to promote "the election of Labour candidates to the various elective offices local and imperial" and to secure industrial reform. (5)

In the later 1880's this body developed into a branch of the Labour Electoral Association whose aim was to work for the election of labour candidates in national and local contests through "their adherence to one or the other of the great political parties." (6)

Yet the Liberal Union of Manchester made no use of this centre of working class opinion; the more wealthy, middle class Liberals dominated the party and it was extremely difficult for working men to become official Liberal candidates; Kelley did not again a seat as a Liberal City Councillor until the early 1890's by which time.

there was no sign of a "Labour bench" at the Manchester Town Hall. By this time also it was more than likely that a proportion of working men had followed the course taken by James Mawdsley of the Spinners' Amalgamation, an unsuccessful Liberal candidate in the Manchester municipal elections of 1885, and passed over to the Conservative side during the Home Rule controversy of 1886 ⁽⁷⁾, thus thinning out the radical ranks even more.

The weakness of working class radicalism during the 1880's in the cotton towns was exposed at the Blackburn parliamentary election of 1885. The town itself had a strong Tory tradition, largely maintained in recent years through the influence of three families - the Hornbys and the Feildens, gentry and millowners, and the Thwaites brewing family - who were responsible for much of Blackburn's employment and prosperity and who usually provided at least one Tory candidate. ⁽⁸⁾ The disparity in the relative strength of working class Conservative and Liberal feeling was illustrated in the working men's clubs, six Tory against only two radical at the beginning of the 1880's. ⁽⁹⁾ Blackburn was the kind of constituency that the Liberal party found difficult to win, unless it could come up with a candidate who might challenge the Conservatives on their own ground; this did in fact prove possible in 1874 and 1880 with W. E. Briggs, a local cotton magnate and prominent Nonconformist. ⁽¹⁰⁾

W.E.Briggs stood again in 1885 but at this election the choice of a second Liberal candidate in the two member constituency proved difficult. The contest therefore took on a special character when a Labour candidate appeared, sponsored by a local organisation calling itself the Labour Representation League. ⁽¹¹⁾ Its candidate was

J. N. Boothman, a sailor's son who had worked his way to being a mill manager and then successfully floated his own enterprise in Blackburn which employed about three hundred people. Boothman was a well known local figure by the mid eighties, popular with the cotton workers because of his contributions to their strike fund during the weaving stoppage of 1884 and respected for his vigorous work as a Liberal councillor during the previous seven years. (12)

The motivation for Boothman's candidature arose out of the resentment felt by the town's cotton operatives to many of their employers after the weaving strike, from which there sprang a desire to send a labour representative to Parliament to speak for Blackburn's working people. Boothman claimed to be "sinking party politics in order to champion the working man" (13) and received support from leading local trade unionists (14) for this stance, but his position was open to criticism; for instance, the Tory Blackburn Standard commented that he was no more a working man's representative than either of the two Conservatives, inferring that the candidature was simply a radical dodge to get another Liberal elected by duping the working class voters. (15) Nor was suspicion absent from the minds of some trade unionists and rows were frequent in union meetings because of support given to Boothman by some officials. (16) Although the Blackburn Liberals gave Boothman no official support during his campaign this did not prevent the local branch of the Irish League from branding him a Liberal and treating him as they did Briggs. (17) The upshot was that at the polls Boothman received only 18 per cent of the vote, (18) many staunch Liberals probably "plumping" for Briggs on the assumption that at

least one Tory was bound to win; it was no doubt safe to conclude that Boothman received few middle class votes and failed to win over a substantial proportion of working class Tories. (19)

The ambivalence of his position was aptly summed up by one of the Conservative candidates who termed Boothman "a capitalist in the morning and a labour candidate at night." (20)

It must be admitted that the sample of labour campaigns in 1885 is far too small to produce a clear picture of the aims of working class groups in politics. Clearly the most significant factor is the very lack of a greater interest, revealing that mastery still held in working class politics by the two established parties. In fact there had been little change since the late 1860's. Neither Birtwistle's nor Boothman's efforts manifest any desire to create an independent working class platform, for both fail to envisage a labour movement existing outside either of the two parties. Although Boothman offered an extensive programme of social reforms he was an orthodox radical (21) who was able to hold out little hope to working men that the Liberal party was willing to give the lead to their candidates. (22) The only issue of protest associated with either campaign - and it was not pressed with any force nor taken up with any interest by the electorate - was that labour representation would help to give working people a voice in party counsels and in Parliament. Yet all the eleven working men elected to Parliament in 1885 had these thoughts in their minds and their presence did not mark a profound change in national politics. There is no reason, therefore, to believe that the existence of such thoughts among a small section of Lancashire workers was in any

way very significant. It remained to be seen however, whether resentment at middle class dominance in politics might develop into an important political issue.

2 Trades Councils and Local Politics

In the following couple of years, to be sure, an attitude of revolt against the two established parties did make itself felt in local politics, albeit to a not very significant degree. However, demands for more labour representation were heard, voiced now by organised groups of working men through their Trades Councils, mainly, so far as reports in the press show, in the cotton districts.

One factor that probably bulked large in the creation of this attitude was the propaganda of the Cotton Factory Times, a weekly newspaper for workers in the cotton trade which appeared first on New Year's Day, 1885. The direction of the paper was in the hands of John Andrew, who ran a radical weekly in the Ashton under Lyne district, but in its early days, especially, the Cotton Factory Times received substantial financial assistance from the three big cotton unions. Much of its copy in these formative years was provided by local union secretaries who saw in the newspaper a useful means of circulating details about the state of trade union activity in the cotton towns, and there can be little doubt that it acted as a valuable agency for recruiting. It would, however, be misleading to regard the Cotton Factory Times as a trade union broadsheet since it also carried stories and tales of working class life, often written by the renowned dialect humourist Ben Brierley. Another member of its staff in the 'eighties was Joseph Burgess, who had edited his own

satirical journal, the Oldham Operative, and who later became a leading figure in the Independent Labour Party. (23) It seems likely that the paper soon proved both popular and influential. (24)

On the question of labour representation it was clear from the outset that the Cotton Factory Times preferred to take a balanced, middle of the road stance: hence one of its early editorials, written by James Mawdsley, included the comment:

"There is ample room for our efforts in regard to legitimate social reform and in the improvement of the conditions under which we live and work, without troubling our minds with the unworkable theories of Mr. Hyndman and the communistic ideas which occasionally dribble over from the continent." (25)

The emphasis was on the practical side of labour representation, supporting the principle of working class participation in politics to secure just representation of the workers' interests against M.P.s who "hoodwinked those who confided in them." (26) For this reason Boothman's campaign at Blackburn was given extensive coverage and encouragement as an indication that "the people are in earnest upon the question of direct representation in Parliament, irrespective of parties." (27) To underline its message the

Cotton Factory Times illustrated the case of the cotton operatives:

"There are no less than 1,053,648 persons engaged in the textile industries. These men and women..... are wholly unrepresented in Parliament whilst their employers are represented by not less than 50 manufacturers." (28)

Here was a clear indictment of middle class predominance in politics, yet the Cotton Factory Times raised no criticisms of the two party system. It did not attempt to formulate a labour programme or urge a labour party. The answer to the problem at this

stage seemed to be - bring out more trade union and workers' candidates at elections and by electing them increase the working man's influence in party counsels. Only as the years passed did it become apparent that the solution was not quite so simple.

During the next few years there were a few attempts to realise the Cotton Factory Times' suggestions. The response had been particularly quick at local level where the Conservatives and Liberals had stamped their influence on borough councils and school boards. Councillors were usually drawn from the business and commercial classes but seldom from the working class. (29) The Cotton Factory Times appreciated the fact that national political sympathies often determined voting behaviour in local elections and tried to direct the attention of the worker to the pressing problems of social reform:

"The worker takes his side and too often cannot be convinced that there is no possible connection between some leading statesman's views as to whether it is to our advantage to take possession of the North Pole, and the manner in which our streets should be paved and our cottages put up." (30)

It was not inapposite to stress the importance of local government as an agent of social reform, since municipal authorities were invested with wide administrative powers, the efficient exercise of which might go far to determine the quality of social life in a community. All the large centres of population had their own borough or city council whilst the smaller industrial towns were grouped under the governance of local boards, and, after the Local Government Act of 1888, the county councils came into existence to administer the more rural areas. Thus in a comparatively well-

governed town or city the local corporation could use its powers to improve social conditions. Manchester is a good example: in the early 1840's it possessed very few amenities: no public parks or baths, no libraries or art galleries open to the public, no piped water. But during the next 50 years, by a judicious application of statutory powers, the City Council was able to take over and improve the city's water supply, produce its own gas, control the markets, provide cheap transport, set up a municipal electricity plant, open hospitals, create free libraries and lay down public parks. (31) Most other towns followed the same progress, though not always at the same pace.

Such reforms benefited all sections of the community and, of course, chimed well with sentiments of civic pride. Yet very often they threw up problems of a particular importance for organised labour. Many local councils, for example, entrusted private companies with the execution of municipal undertakings and such contractors frequently paid their employees at less than trade union wage rates. Consequently it became the aim of Trades Councils in many towns to enforce "fair contracts" on the local authorities to ensure that work done on behalf of the municipality by private employers carried with it a guarantee of adequate remuneration for the workmen. "Fair contracts" therefore became a sphere in which the trade union ethos clashed with employer influence in local politics. Two other sensitive subjects were Poor Law relief and education. For workers without strong trade union protection the Poor Law was an important source of sustenance, especially during periods of trade depression when poverty was most keenly felt; the Boards of Guardians, elected

by the ratepayers, were responsible for administering "outdoor" and workhouse relief, an obligation which introduced into local government the problem of providing adequate assistance for the destitute whilst at the same time curbing the contributions paid by middle class people to the Poor Rate. (32) Education, after the Act of 1870, was in many towns under the democratic control of the School Boards, elected triennially; in school board elections it was very common for the conflicting parties to adopt a religious attitude, with groups representing the Anglican Church, the Nonconformists and Catholicism, all struggling to secure control of the board's policies.

Thus there were at least three areas in which working class influence was needed in local politics, but before the mid 1880's there is little evidence of organised labour pressure groups. (33) Outside the two main parties political activity was not well established, whilst inside the weighty decisions came from middle class people. The lack of working men representatives in local authorities may partly be explained by the comparatively late removal of one of the main obstacles to political activity at local level, the existence of property qualifications for candidates. This was not swept away until the Municipal Corporations Act of 1882 and thereafter the only barrier, a not insignificant one, it is true, was expense. Yet Trades Councils could generally find sufficient cash to mount a campaign and it is therefore not surprising to find some movements getting under weigh by the mid 'eighties.

But initial attempts to create labour groups in local politics lacked experience and expertise and were all very disappointing. In

1885 the Trades Councils of Oldham, Rochdale and Hyde promoted labour candidates with minimal success. The Oldham School Board elections of that year attracted four labour candidates who fought to reduce the cost of school books, an important matter for local cotton workers who had experienced a thirteen weeks strike and wage reductions during that autumn. (34) There was no contest and the Trades Council was able to place two of its nominees upon the new School Board by a process of negotiation with the other parties; one, in fact, joined the Church party and the other^{the} Nonconformist, so there was no independent labour group established, but the Trades Council had illustrated its value as a negotiating force. (35)

At Hyde the secretaries of the local Spinners' and Weavers' unions were nominated as Trades Council candidates in the municipal elections. Heginbotham of the Spinners declared that the workers wanted "direct representation" and their campaign was centred upon free education and free public bathing facilities. (36) The Weavers' secretary, Bancroft, later withdrew and Heginbotham was harshly beaten by a Liberal in a strongly radical ward. (37) The Rochdale Trades Council sponsored four candidates in the 1885 School Board elections to oppose the previous Board's decision to raise the standard for half-time exemption, a move which caused a delay in the time when a child could abandon full-time education to start working. (38) The Labour candidates also proposed a reduction in school fees and a revision of the teaching system (39), but before the election took place dissension became evident in the ranks of the Trades Council because of the body's political activity; the number of candidates was halved and the remaining contestants both came at the bottom of

of the poll. (40)

Each of these three movements displayed the weaknesses inherent in local labour politics. Without an attempt to challenge for power local labour candidates could be quite easily swallowed up by the two dominant parties, as happened at Oldham. Moreover, as yet the faith of the few who were convinced of the need for labour representation was insufficient to move the many electors who saw no reason for voting Labour. In 1887 the Cotton Factory Times was speaking of the "innumerable difficulties" that attended local labour politics. (41)

Yet there were still chances to be taken by working class groups that could take charge of spontaneous local discontent. A situation arose at Bolton in 1887 which again illustrated the need for labour representation in municipal government.

Bolton was a large industrial town with most of its workers in the fine spinning trade, of which it was the centre. It also had an extensive engineering interest, producing textile machinery for the mills and for export. During a bout of poor trade in 1886 wage reductions had been made in Bolton's engineering workshops and in 1887 attempts were made, mainly by the Steam Engine Makers' Society, to improve wages and bring them up to the Manchester standard. (42)

The union secretary, James Swift, received the support of Robert Austin of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in the campaign for improved wages and began in addition to demand the abolition of systematic overtime. (43) In April 1887 the engineering workers gave notice to stop working unless a wage increase of two shillings a week was made. The employers countered with a resolve to dismiss all men

who refused to work overtime. On May 2nd the Bolton Iron Strike began, involving members of four engineering unions. (44)

The strike was conducted peacefully, though without success, until June, when the employers began to import substitute labour; their intentions were to keep the foundries running at all costs and the result was that police protection for imported workers began to be generally applied against the taunts and attacks of trade union pickets. (45) Battles between strikers and police developed and grew into serious rioting in the vicinity of the large workshops where substitute labour had been most successfully introduced. By the end of June the Bolton Watch Committee, which had already received support from the County Constabulary, requested and was granted the services of a detachment of Lancashire Hussars to quell disturbances in the town. These repressive measures seriously weakened the strikers' position, allowing the unimpeded importation of non-union workmen; they also gave Bolton the appearance of an occupied town. (46)

A political reaction to the attitude of the municipal authorities was quick to develop. It sprang from two sources: the workers, who read the situation in terms of class oppression and were determined to restore justice, and the radical ratepayers, angered by the lavish use of public money for the protection of certain employers' interests. Since 1867, it may be noted, Bolton had been in the political grip of the Conservative party, supported by many leading industrialists, and the events of 1887 provided the radicals with an opportunity to strike out against their adversaries. A Ratepayers' Association was formed. It was soon acting with the Bolton Trades Council when that body decided to contest all the vacant wards in the

November municipal elections with labour candidates and pledged itself to assist any movement that aimed to "protect the rights of the people." (47) After the withdrawal of the troops and extra police in early August the Ratepayers' Association held several "indignation meetings" through which a group of militant, self-employed tradesmen led by a tea dealer called James Kirkham assumed control of the movement. It claimed about 300 active members by October and had formulated an election schedule which aimed at cutting down on public expenditure and called for evening council meetings so as to enable working men to attend.

The passions kindled by the strike had in fact thrown together strange bedfellows; there was little in common between the Ratepayers' Association, whose municipal candidates included three grocers, a newsagent, three insurance agents and three licensed victuallers, and the Trades Council, led by its staunch Tory secretary, John Fielding. Nonetheless, the two factions agreed to co-operate, using "their own whips and their own judgement," (48) if their candidates were elected. Yet there was no attempt to include in this alliance the Bolton S.D.F. which had sought, but been refused, support and which therefore campaigned in the elections as a separate group. (49)

Eight Labour candidates were successful. Two factors probably influenced the result; firstly, the strike in the engineering trade had been concluded in a matter which satisfied no one, least of all the workers who were left disgruntled and penniless, willing to register their disapproval of the capitalist element in the borough council; secondly, there had been an honourable agreement between the

Ratepayers' Association and the Liberal Party whereby six Ratepayer candidates of radical sympathies had been unopposed by Liberals. When the new council became known, therefore, nine labour representatives were in it. (50) This was the largest single group of working class councillors in any Lancashire town and the first attempt to establish a separate labour group in local politics. It was a signal achievement, yet its subsequent history was very disappointing. Why was this so?

In the first place the Ratepayers' representatives had no real link with the Trades Council, thus rendering unity of purpose difficult to achieve. Secondly, each of the Labour councillors had very definite party views, mostly radical, and with no significant independent labour ideology to sustain them on questions not directly concerned with the working class they were inclined to side with the party of their choice, more often than not appearing as supernumerary Liberals or Conservatives. A further factor of importance was the group's inability to maintain the militancy of 1887 once the events that had provoked its election had passed.

But for a short while the labour group prospered and in 1888 numbers were increased to eleven. By displaying increasingly radical sympathies, however, the Ratepayers' Association councillors soon found their support from the Trades Council waning. As group spirit began to decline the Trades Council withdrew from its role in the movement and, thought not rejecting the principle of labour representation outrightly, decided to abandon further political plans, "considering the diversity of political opinion existing amongst us." (51) By 1890 the labour group was destroyed.

"The experience of Bolton.....would seem to point to the conclusion that the working classes are not yet as a body open to accept the movement apart from political bias,"

was the judgement of the Cotton Factory Times on labour representation .

at this time. (52)

Bolton's experience was not without significance, however. It proved that to elect labour councillors with substantial working class support at the polls was a possibility. But was the effort worthwhile? The Bolton labour movement was clearly a special case, having the impetus of an extraordinary strike to provide spontaneous combustion for an expression of working class discontent; yet even under such conditions as these the movement disintegrated. In normal circumstances the pressures exerted on working class political independence by the middle class dominated Conservative and Liberal parties were all the more evident; the timidity of trades councils in the face of the political controversy aroused between Tory and radical workers on the subject of labour representation made it seem reasonably certain that no significant changes in working class politics would proceed in this manner and at this level.

3 Trades Unions and Local Politics

The tempo of labour politics did not appreciably quicken until the new unionist growth of the late 'eighties and early nineties, with its consequent spur to socialist agitation. The intermittent election of trades council candidates to local representative authorities continued, but no sign of change came from local Liberal and Conservative parties which evinced as much keenness in taking votes from labour candidates as from each other. Some trades councils were beginning to eschew compromise with either of the parties because of their general hostility, (53) but there was little uniformity in this behaviour. (54) In two areas, however, changes were taking place, which though not staggering, do reveal an important difference in outlook. It is worth looking at the municipal elections in St Helens and Nelson in 1890 to gauge their significance for

labour representation.

The two towns were industrially very different, St. Helens a mining and chemical centre, Nelson a weaving district. Both, however, shared a history of rapid and confusing industrial development during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. By 1890 both could be considered "boom towns".

At St. Helens technological changes in the chemical works had led to a deterioration in working conditions ⁽⁵⁵⁾ which ultimately stimulated the growth of trade unionism. In 1890, as a result of a strike at Pilkingtons', a Trades Council was established representing initially 24 trades. ⁽²⁶⁾ In the course of the agitation to strengthen unionism among the chemical workers P. J. King of the Chemical and Copper Workers' Union announced his society's intention of sponsoring labour candidates in local elections against councillors who were also prominent employers, to see, as he put it, "whether the working men were stronger than these so-called aristocrats." ⁽⁵⁷⁾

Three candidates were eventually put forward, two of whom, including Thomas Glover of the Miners, were defeated; in North Eccleston ward, however, Robert Hunter of the Glass Bottle Makers, achieved a remarkable victory by beating a representative of the Pilkington glass family thus striking a great blow, as it seemed, for the working people. ⁽⁵⁸⁾

On the surface this single gain looked no more impressive than many previous ventures at local level, but at least the St. Helens movement showed a willingness on the part of a new union to promote political action directly, on a class basis, using the solidarity and funds of the union to strengthen chances at the polls.

This method showed with even greater clarity in the same year at Nelson. The local Weavers' Association had been established in 1870 and

by the late 'eighties its membership had reached almost 3,000 having been swelled over the previous ten years by many uprooted textile workers from the West Riding of Yorkshire who had poured into Nelson seeking jobs in the mills. (59) Nelson, quite unlike the Tory and Catholic town of St. Helens, was markedly nonconformist and radical. Its political ethos flourished among the town's workers, who in 1889 had achieved industrial unity by setting up a Trades Council, linking the massed ranks of the Weavers' Association with their fellows in the warp dressing, plumbing, clogging and tailoring trades. (60) William Ward of the Weavers became the Council's first secretary in 1890 and when Nelson received a borough charter in that year he took the lead in suggesting that a trade union party should be among the groups contesting the first municipal election. (61)

When the Weavers' Association went ahead with a scheme to sponsor two candidates, including Ward, their action was unprecedented in cotton union history. Undoubtedly the reason for this was the remarkable degree of unity among working class radicals, obviating the divisions of political opinion that often developed in other towns when it came to trade union politics. Ward and Tattersall, the two candidates, were both radicals and there was some speculation in Nelson that they might be adopted by Liberal Ward committees (62) though in the event both were opposed by Liberal candidates. By standing firm to a trade union party they made a significant gesture of independence. A mild programme was devised to catch the working class vote: economy in borough expenditure, fair trade union contracts, cheaper school books and the abolition of gas meter rents. (63) In spite of the Liberal opposition both Ward and Tattersall were successful.

The Cotton Factory Times claimed to see in the Nelson result "a determination on the part of industrial classes to put an end to the present unsatisfactory state of class monopoly" (64): it might have been

added also that the result was important because it pointed towards trade union politics, with the possibility of achieving county wide working class action based on the strength of the trade unions. If Nelson methods could be extended to the federated structure of the cotton unions there was a chance that trade union representatives might be sent to parliament. But it was a long step from electioneering in Nelson to seats at Westminster.

4 Summary

The period between 1885 and 1890 is a disappointing one viewed in terms of labour representation in industrial Lancashire. Certainly, by 1890, no profound changes had taken place in the politics of the region. Most working class men still continued to vote Liberal or Conservative according to well established traditions of electoral behaviour; as yet no independent working class loyalties had been created. Those who advocated labour representation were only a handful of politically conscious men and even they had hit upon no clear sighted formula to achieve their aim. Nevertheless, there was a general, if sometimes submerged, feeling among working class ^{leaders} that middle class dominance in politics created a basic injustice requiring redress. Yet if this situation was to be exploited it seemed certain that the initiative would not come from the action of trades councils at local level. To be sure, the future development of labour politics in 1890 was still uncertain, but it appeared more likely that two other courses offered the prospect of a successful breakthrough: either the conversion of a substantial number to the socialist philosophy, or the creation of a trade union programme of labour representation. Both could provide the centralised direction of energies from which an independent tradition in working class politics might issue.

TOWARDS TRADE UNION POLITICS

The slow progress of working class politics in Lancashire during the ten years after 1885 was determined largely by the attitudes of the region's two most powerful groups of trade unionists - the miners and the cotton workers. Whilst some new unions turned quickly towards the politics of an independent labour party the main activity of the miners and cotton workers was concentrated in their industrial battle with the employers. By the mid 1890's both groups had made substantial gains in wage negotiations and, to an extent, this obviated the need for political activity. Economic security tended to breed political quietism. Yet new problems gradually became evident, particularly in regard to working conditions in the mines and weaving mills, which the unions could not solve satisfactorily by industrial action; these were eventually to turn trade union attention to the task of re-inforcing traditional weapons with a programme demanding parliamentary reform. It was this change of emphasis, coming as a realisation of the inadequacy of a straightforward industrial policy, that brought the miners' and cotton workers' unions into contact with the political implications of their role as working class institutions.

A THE MINERS

Until 1903, when it affiliated to the Labour Representation Committee, the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation was the

least diligent and least successful of the county miners' unions in political activity. Under the leadership of Ashton and Woods the Federation concentrated on building up its industrial strength and many of the problems by which it was beset in this sphere proved equally obstructive for political policy. The radical tendencies always evident in some districts were dampened by the apathy of Tory colliers and, moreover, the union leadership had no unifying influence in the press such as the Cotton Factory Times. Experience in the political field was thus severely limited.

1. Politics, 1885 - 1892

Between the establishment of the Federation in 1881 and the General Election of 1885 there had been no attempt to consider schemes for Labour representation, despite the example set by Thomas Burt's Miners' National Union. The Lancashire Federation's policy of co-operation with other coalfields nevertheless brought it into the wider sphere of mining politics, during the middle years of the 1880's when the radical elements among the Lancashire colliers were attempting to assert their political views. They shared the outlook of the Miners' National Union's leading north-eastern representatives, Burt, Crawford, Fenwick and Wilson, all Gladstonian Liberals who represented mining constituencies in Parliament after 1885. The considerable Tory element among the Lancashire miners, however, was headed by the influential Thomas Ashton who did not always agree with Woods on political matters; but even Ashton could not disagree with the radical local secretaries

who supported Woods in calling for miners' reforms through legislative action.

In 1883 the miners of Ashton and Haydock district, where Sam Woods was the local agent, had declared themselves "in favour of a national organisation being established that would consider all matters relating to trade and wages and legislation both legally and politically".⁽¹⁾ Woods seized the opportunity in 1885 of advancing the programme decided upon by a miners' national conference held at Birmingham in 1884 as the means of implementing his district's intentions, and secured the programme's adoption by the Lancashire Miners' Federation as its official programme for the 1885 General Election. Despite their radical overtones the policies were issued in all Lancashire mining constituencies in the form of a questionnaire for parliamentary candidates.⁽²⁾

The miners' demands were received coolly by the Conservative candidates,⁽³⁾ who in general represented the colliery proprietors. Sam Woods was denounced as the mouthpiece of the Liberal caucus, and accused of attempting to deceive the workers by masking the poor record of the Liberal government in foreign affairs by making appeals for socialistic reform.⁽⁴⁾

In reality Woods' relations with the local Liberals were not so close. To support their demands the miners had decided at a special pit set conference in April 1885 to contest the Ince parliamentary division with a labour candidate from among their ranks.⁽⁵⁾

Ince had been carved out of the old two member borough of Wigan at the Redistribution and contained a high proportion of miner voters, newly enfranchised by the Third Reform Act. It seemed an ideal constituency for such a candidate but the co-operation of the local Liberal association was needed to put the plan into practice. It also seemed that the best chance of Liberal success in this area, in the face of hostile Tory criticism, was to sponsor a Liberal Labour candidate. The local party, however, failed to respond. The official Liberal candidates at Ince and Wigan were both middle class men who had much sympathy for the miners' grievances⁽⁶⁾ and when it became clear that they had no intention of standing aside Woods refrained from pressing the labour candidature for fear of splitting the radical vote.

The election results did not vindicate the Liberal party's attitude; in spite of economic distress in the coal towns, which might have been turned to good effect against the employers, the Liberals won only one seat, Leigh, in the centre of the mining region and in the other mining constituencies the Conservative candidates came through with comfortable majorities.⁽⁷⁾ The Liberal defeat of 1885, and the decisions wrought in the party the following year by the Home Rule issue, scotched the hopes of the radical miners in Lancashire; the Conservatives offered no chance of legislative reform whilst their victory boosted the influence of their supporters amongst the miners, who were able to strike back against radical programmes derived from other regions. When T.R. Threlfall raised the question of

a national Labour Electoral Committee in 1886, the Lancashire Miners' resolved that their delegates should not support the scheme at the forthcoming Trades Union Congress. (8) Whilst the measure received the encouragement of mining unions in the north east, South Wales and Yorkshire, Lancashire stood apart. (9) A further attempt was made by the Ashton and Haydock district to goad the Federation into political activity in 1887; its representatives introduced the question of a miners' Member of Parliament for Lancashire to the conference of September 1887, held at Wigan. So slight was the interest displayed in the motion, however, that the business was adjourned and soon passed into oblivion. (10)

For a time, during the bad industrial situation of 1887 and early 1888, radicalism thus disappeared among the Lancashire Miners. The Federation played only a minor role in parliamentary lobbying, wielding little influence in the negotiations to amend the Employer's Liability Act, or in those which secured the passage of the Coal Mines Regulation Act. (11) Moreover the Lancashire Federation was drifting out of its slender association with the Miners' National Union, which supported the sliding scale system, after disagreements over the handling of the Mines Regulation Bill. By June 1889, after all prospects of a Lancashire sliding scale had vanished, the federation severed its connection completely. (12)

More positive political action did not manifest itself until the joint wages movement had gathered momentum towards the close of the 1880's. With wage advances and increasing membership the

Lancashire Federation was in a position to test the Eight Hours Day. In national counsels the miners were drawn into two conflicting groups over this question; the sliding scale areas, particularly Northumberland, Durham and South Wales opposed Eight Hours, whilst the unions of the Central Coalfields were convinced of the need to restrict output. (13)

The struggle over Eight Hours continued to be waged through a web of sectional interests. Already laid was a scheme of the socialist Keir Hardie; he had introduced the concept of a general law on Eight Hours at the 1887 Trades Union Congress. Hardie's plan had close links with the miners' demands. His political associate of this period, R.B. Cunningham Graham, Liberal M P for North Lanark, had drawn up a parliamentary bill which would limit shifts in collieries to eight hours each day. Graham's move had been prompted mainly by the Scottish miners, to be presented to the Commons during 1889. It received the support of radical coalminers who, though sustaining the Liberal secretary of the Trades Union Congress, Henry Broadhurst, in his conflict with the socialist Hardie, accepted the latter's views on legislation for Eight hours, especially if they applied to mines. In fact it was Thomas Aspinwall, the Wigan Miners' agent, who placed before the 1889 Trades Union Congress a motion demanding an Eight Hours Bill for the coal industry. (14) Aspinwall's suggestion was accepted by a large majority of the delegates, though progress towards the presentation in the Commons of a bill was baulked by Charles Fenwick

a Northumberland Miners' official and opponent of Eight Hours who in 1890 became secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress. (15)

There was also the possibility of obtaining an Eight Hour Day by strike action. This course too had its favourties (16), although Lancashire had opted for legislation, and ultimately the legislation plan prevailed; it would ensure a strict and universal application. By January 1890 the Miners' Federation of Great Britain had decided to press for a law; because of the influence of its opponents in the Trades Union Congress, however, the Federation required sympathetic Members to support them and if possible two of its own officials in Parliament. Pickard, the President and Sam Woods, the Vice-President, were the chosen men, although Lancashire remained vague on the question of Labour representation. The Lancashire Federation, in its new rules of 1891, had committed itself to no more than an obligation "to assist in returning labour representatives to seats in the House of Commons". (17) But with the new inter-county federation, which Lancashire had helped to create, already decided upon political action, it seemed that the Lancashire men could no longer hold back.

In April 1890 a meeting of miners in the Bolton district had taken the bold step of putting forward Sam Woods as a Labour candidate for the forthcoming General Election; an electoral committee was appointed and the following month it was decided that he should contest Ince. Woods agreed to fight there against Colonel Blundell, a colliery owner who had consistently voted

against the miners' demands. (18) In addition Woods promised that he would attempt to negotiate for support from the two political parties in order to establish a safe Labour seat for the Miners. (19)

The political action now decided upon differed fundamentally from that contemplated in the mid 'eighties. In the first place the Miners Federation of Great Britain resolved to make an Eight Hours Bill the criterion for support of candidates in mining constituencies. (20) There was thus a more direct labour appeal in the programme than there had been in the strongly partisan policies of 1885 and this was likely to win support from both radical and tory colliers. The effect of this was to give the miners' leaders a more independent posture, whereas before they had been regarded as political allies of the Liberal party. Secondly the Liberal attitude assisted this development; Gladstone's conception of social reform, or 'construction' as he called it, was rather reluctantly offered to his party at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1891 and whilst it offered several reforms for the working class its "staple-diet" was Home Rule for Ireland. (21) On the coalminers' grievances Gladstone revealed himself to be at variance with organised Labour: of Eight Hours he said:

"It will require more than a mere majority in certain trades that are highly organised - it will require more even than a majority in all trades all over the country - so to bind the majority that they shall be the subjects of coercive proceedings if they are unwilling, or if they find themselves unable in justice to those dependent upon them, to conform to the new standard. I give no absolute judgement upon a question which has not yet I believe by an appeal to the country, been

examined." (22)

The Liberal party's standpoint had important consequences for the miners of Lancashire. Liberal candidates seemed vague on Eight Hours whilst the Conservatives, alarmed by the prominence of the Irish question, retreated into a shell of reaction. The Tory Members for Newton-le-Willows, Ince and Wigan all opposed the idea of an Eight Hour day by law, although one or two were willing to concede its achievement by industrial bargaining, a step which the colliers had already rejected. (23) When the Mines (Eight Hours) Bill was scheduled for its second reading in the Commons on March 23rd, 1892 most of the Conservative Members for the Lancashire coalfield opposed it (24) and by a vote of 272 to 160 the reading was postponed and the Lancashire Miners' Federation was made to realise the strength of its opposition; the coalminers' lobby had been represented by four Lancashire M.P.s.

- It seemed that the General Election of 1892 in Lancashire mining towns would be a direct confrontation between the Conservatives and the coalminer voters; in short, between capital and labour. At least this gave the miners a chance to fight the perennial industrial battle at the political level and they were resolute in battle. (26) Besides bringing more unity to the colliers' cause, these factors helped to adumbrate the position of the Miners' Federation as a potential anti - capitalist and hence radical political force in the coalfield.

The Labour campaigns of 1892 are more important as an illustration of how Miners were able to outmanœuvre the Liberal party, rather than as a sign of the progress in their political education. At Wigan and Ince the Liberals gave way to Miners' candidates; Woods (Ince) was allowed a clear run against the Conservative. There was no official pact with the Liberal party, nor would the L C M F have dared to make one; Thomas Ashton summed the situation up in 1893:

"Let it be clearly understood that the Federation does not recognise any politics except Labour..... certainly we paid the election expenses of Mr. Woods, who received the support of the Liberal party in Ince but it is well known that up to the present it has been utterly impossible to return a 'Labour candidate' without the assistance of one of the great political parties". (27)

Woods himself claimed that his election and parliamentary expenses were paid by the Miners Federation. (28) The second Labour candidate was Thomas Aspinwall at Wigan; here the Liberal party had simply approached Aspinwall to be its candidate, (29) and though a leading official of the Miners' Federation he did not stand as an official L C M F candidate; all colliers knew, however, that if elected he would be able to perform the same job.

Both men campaigned with radical policies in addition to their demands for the Eight Hours Bill. Woods, officially designated a "Liberal and Labour candidate", attacked the aristocracy with the Newcastle Programme and particularly denounced the coal owning aristocracy by demanding an end to mining royalties and appealing for improvements in working conditions in the mines. (30) Aspinwall was happy to support Home Rule ("a question of Irish Labour"), Welsh Church disestablishment and liquor control, questions with little

meaning for the English working class. (31) The electorate in both constituencies had a fairly high proportion of miner voters, but even though both Conservative candidates opposed the Eight Hour Bill the lack of ^areally binding Labour programme left Woods and Aspinwall open to effective and hostile Tory propaganda. (32) In addition the Conservative party had more money, experience and voluntary election workers. Aspinwall was defeated at Wigan (33) and blamed his organisation. (34) Ince polled later on and the hiatus between the elections seemed to produce a labour swing, for Woods won a narrow victory. (35) But clearly, in spite of the psychological effect of a pre-election Labour meeting sponsored by the Miners' Federation, (36) the Conservative party had been able to win a sizeable share of the colliers' votes in both constituencies.

There were two principal lessons to be learnt from the campaigns. Firstly, the Lancashire Miners had in part been able to profit by the weakness of the Liberal Party in the mining towns; in other mining regions of England, which were generally Liberal strongholds, local Liberal parties were not obliged to support trade union candidates since wealthy industrialists could quite easily be elected. (37) Consequently, though its gains were slight, the Lancashire Miners' Federation was still better represented at the polls in 1892 than any of the other unions in the M.F.G.B. network, whilst the future held better opportunities for the Lancashire Miners to embark on Labour representation plans. Secondly there were several obstacles to face; a systematic Labour platform would have to be established instead of relying

upon ad hoc issues such as the Eight Hours Day; less overt reliance on Liberal organisation and policies would have to be displayed in case a Liberal recovery became evident which would rob Labour progress of its momentum; the Miners' Federation, a loosely knit, centralised body required to gain more influence in the localities if its political leadership was to be accepted at constituency level. The inter-dependance of trade union growth and the development of Labour politics was crucial.

2. The Campaign of 1895

Some of these lessons were given point by the disappointments of the years 1892 to 1895. Political divisions among the colliers still proved a disruptive influence. Early in 1894 the question of Aspinwall's position as Labour candidate at Wigan was raised; though the Federation agreed that he should stand at the next General Election⁽³⁸⁾ but the experiences of 1892 and Aspinwall's close association with Liberalism led the delegates to urge that,

"Any candidate whose election expenses may be paid from the funds of the Federation must not lend his services to either political party unless an advantage is to be gained thereby affecting the workers generally". (39)

Further proof of the desire to arrest Liberal influence came during 1894; in April T. R. Threlfall appeared before the Lancashire Miners' Conference requesting the Federation to support his Labour Electoral Association. The question was referred to the districts

and the proposal consequently was decisively rejected.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Though the L.E.A. did claim some influence in the Central Coalfields (W. E. Harvey of the Derbyshire Miners was vice-president of the body in 1894) its pronounced Liberal proclivities were too much for the Tory element in the Lancashire Federation. If the L.C.M.F., was to command a left wing vote in the coalfield it would have to be in a guise other than that of Liberal pressure group.

At the same time political feeling was beginning to evaporate as a result of the 1893 lock-out and the disappointing progress of the miners' Eight Hours Bill.⁽⁴¹⁾ When a General Election was fixed for 1895 Woods and Aspinwall were again promoted as Labour candidates, though the intense feeling which had supported them three years earlier could by now no longer be counted upon. Moreover the Liberal party at Wigan began to reassert itself after the Miners' had attempted to consolidate their candidate in the borough. In order to establish a more independent position Aspinwall had set up a campaign committee at Wigan, directed by the L.C.M.F. Treasurer, Robert Isherwood; perhaps because they feared a loss of their influence and also probably to placate the middle class Liberal votes,⁽⁴²⁾ the local Liberals decided in 1895 to remove Aspinwall and substitute^{for} him William Woods, a former Conservative Mayor of Wigan and a radical sympathiser, who had quarrelled with his own party in 1892 over its handling on the Eight Hours question.⁽⁴³⁾ The Wigan Liberals therefore informed Aspinwall that by a vote of 39 to 9 they had

decided to sponsor William Woods. The Miners' Federation was predictably indignant at this denial of its position and resolved to contest the seat no matter what the opposition might be.⁽⁴⁴⁾ It seemed that the radical vote would be split and the Conservative party accorded a comfortable victory in what ought to have been a close contest. Only after the informal counsel of the Prime Minister, Rosebery, did the Wigan Liberal Association reverse its decision and support Aspinwall;⁽⁴⁵⁾ but it cannot be said that the outcome was a real triumph for the Miners' Federation, for it had clearly not as yet laid a pre-emptive claim to the seat.

The campaigns of Woods and Aspinwall in 1895 were a disaster. Both offered the same policies as in 1892 - radical reform and specific demands for the coal industry. Both, however, were affected by the reaction to the Liberal government and its failure to deal with the Eight Hours Bill and unemployment.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Furthermore the Liberal party was split nationally and the two Labour candidates exacerbated their positions by following the lead of Lord Rosebery, emphasising the radical question of the day, "Who Shall Rule, The Peers or The People".⁽⁴⁷⁾ Working class questions were therefore reduced in prominence; Woods and Aspinwall were both easily defeated;⁽⁴⁸⁾ although Liberal and Labour enthusiasm had been high before the poll⁽⁴⁹⁾ the position had slipped back to that of 1885-86. The cumulative effects of two years' political disappointment and the consequent bad

temper of the miners operated against Woods and Aspinwall, whilst deficient registration completed the picture. Woods recalled Wigan's corrupt past in blaming for the defeats "the screw and intimidation and other base influences" manipulated by the Conservatives,⁽⁵⁰⁾ though Aspinwall probably was more perceptive when he admitted simply "there seemed to be a desire for a change of Government".⁽⁵¹⁾

3. Summary

Although 1895 marked a lull in the attempts of the Lancashire Miners to secure labour representation there was clearly a desire on the part of the colliers to pursue political activity as a means of articulating reform. Since 1889 Lancashire had gained strength through its association with the national wages movement and if the Federation was to continue to benefit from solidarity it must make political running on the Eight Hours question. But in Lancashire it was plain that trade union politics would have to be carried out under colours different from those of the Liberal party. A workers' party was needed. Moreover, the form that such an organisation might take was fairly obvious: because of the weakness of socialism in the Lancashire coalfield the odds were very much on a reformist trade union party's replacing radicalism as the instrument for bringing improvements in working class conditions. With tighter organisation and increased membership the miners' trade union was becoming an important institution in coalfield life by the mid 1890's and this provided the basis for securing the miners' loyalty to an independent labour

position in politics, winning them away from their traditional political allegiances. Of course, such developments were only in their infancy in 1895 but in the light of these conditions and attitudes the history of the Miners' Federation in the early years of the next century is more meaningful.

B THE COTTON WORKERS

The trade unions in the cotton industry were less politically inclined than the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners. Official policy eschewed political partisanship and the trade union was not regarded as an agent of political action. The Cotton Factory Times realised that the trade unionist's point of view was not represented sufficiently in Parliament but feared the divisions which materialised among the rank and file when political issues were raised: "it is this division of our ranks which is at present standing in the way of a proper understanding of our interests", it remarked in 1885.⁽⁵²⁾ Trade union solidarity was valued more highly than political power.

On the other hand, workers' demands for factory reform could not be secured without some recourse to Parliament; experience had shown that organised lobbying could be a productive tool; for instance, it was the "short-time" agitation of the early 1870's that had secured the 56½ hour week in the 1878 Factory and Workshop Act.⁽⁵³⁾ During the next few years the cotton unions had established ad hoc parliamentary committees to discuss questions of legislative importance whenever they arose.⁽⁵⁴⁾

These bodies often consulted with similar employers' committees

and provided strong pressure groups at elections, forcing candidates to consider the workers' point of view. Moreover this type of political behaviour had the advantage of neutrality, since it operated in the same way whatever party happened to be in power. Yet it was not pursued with any consistency, being employed only in emergencies when industrial action failed.

1. Factory Reform

After the franchise reforms of 1884 the value of such methods clearly increased whilst industrial changes showed that they were needed. With the increase in membership of the Weavers' Amalgamation and the appearance of newly organised cardroom workers, a group of workers emerged who were less well paid than the spinners and also less well organised and who therefore looked to Parliament for laws to regulate working conditions, especially since there were many female and juvenile workers in their ranks. (55)

In the mid 1880's these objections were dealt with by the Northern Counties Factory Acts Reform Association, which worked within fixed terms of reference: "the securing of a better observance of the Factory and Workshops Act and an amendment of the Limited Liability Act", the latter aim representing the policy of the Spinners' Amalgamation. The Association provided a common meeting ground for the three major unions in the industry, with James Mawdsley as chairman and Thomas Birtwistle secretary. It worked independently of the Trades Union Congress. In 1886 the Association decided to concentrate its work in three main

spheres of action; i) to demand more factory inspectors, ii) to secure remedial reforms in factory working conditions and iii) to press for five amendments to the Limited Liability Act.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The Cotton Factory Times spoke of "the determination of the operatives to carry on the agitation until the law became something more than a dead letter".⁽⁵⁷⁾

During the next few years the cotton unions carried on the agitation over these subjects, acquiring the character of a highly organised, apolitical pressure group. Initially the Spinners' Amalgamation controlled the organisation and much of the early work was concerned with working the five amendments on limited liability into a new bill.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Mawdsley was not sanguine⁽⁵⁹⁾ and negotiations, including interviews with Lancashire Members and deputations to Whitehall, proved both tedious and unproductive. The Cotton Factory Times admitted that much of the labour had been "more felt than seen" but was clearly over optimistic in asserting that "the change that has come across the powers that be is little short of a revolution".⁽⁶⁰⁾ In fact the Limited Liability Bill was dropped in 1888, Birtwistle later reporting that it had been abandoned because of opposition from Members of Parliament.⁽⁶¹⁾

In other respects lobbying proved more successful; the existence of the Factory Acts Association provided a means of meeting employers and asserting trade union views and consequently helped to strengthen union control in the industry.

The Weavers' Amalgamation, moreover, hoped to profit by its

agitation on the steaming question. The question of steaming, and the attendant problem of over-sizing, had been brought about by the development of production techniques in the cotton industry during the later nineteenth century. Since the 1870's the increase in foreign competition had wrought important changes in manufacturing and marketing cotton and these in turn were felt by the weaver. Working conditions in the weaving sheds were growing worse rather than better; greater attention was being paid to the reduction of output costs in cloths susceptible to market fluctuation and there was a noticeable movement away from the production of coarse goods to finer counts. In the areas where coarse goods were produced, especially Blackburn, weavers found themselves working with inferior quality yarns; in addition the looms were undergoing improvisations to maximise their efficiency.⁽⁶²⁾ The technique of steaming was introduced to speed up the weaving of poor quality yarns. They were impregnated with a strengthening substance (sizing) and then woven in sheds where a high proportion of steam had been infused into the atmosphere to extend their breaking point. The resultant working conditions, with dust and intense humidity, rendered weaving an unpleasant and often unhealthy trade. By the 1880's these two practices had assumed the proportions of abuses; the Weavers' Amalgamation hoped to remedy them through the intervention of the Factory Acts Association in Parliament.

Blackburn became the centre for the steaming agitation during 1888 and 1889. The local Corporation was persuaded to

set up a committee of enquiry in 1888 which concluded from its evidence that in the Blackburn district steaming had been "largely and excessively used and that weavers had suffered in health as a consequence".⁽⁶³⁾ During the same year the agitation was extended to all the weaving towns and there were frequent mass meetings calling for action;⁽⁶⁴⁾ by October it was understood that policy would be directed towards steaming's total abolition, now the most important single issue in the cotton industry, whilst David Holmes, the Weavers' president, was speaking almost every night to local meetings and promising an end to steaming.⁽⁶⁵⁾

From these beginnings the agitation developed into a situation which drastically affected cotton union policy and, in the long run, labour politics in Lancashire. In the first place the employers opposed the workers' demands. When Holmes and Mawdsley introduced the idea of total prohibition to a meeting of employers and M.P.s in 1889 W.E.M. Tomlinson, the Conservative Member for Preston, declared that "absolute prohibition of any kind of moisture might destroy a great deal of trade".⁽⁶⁶⁾ The manufacturers proposed a full scale enquiry into the practice but the idea was rejected outright by the cotton workers in May 1889; they would settle for nothing less than "to proceed at once with the question in a practical way in a short bill".⁽⁶⁷⁾ This placed the union leadership in a difficult position, for it had always been their policy to secure for their members a position as responsible and equal partners in the management of the cotton

industry. An option in this situation would involve loss of prestige on either front, with the workers or with the employers. Furthermore the Home Office, which would take charge of any bill, would undertake no action unless both sides of industry were in agreement. Since the chances of securing the passage of an opposed bill in the current 1889 session were very remote the union leaders decided upon a compromise course; a bill which would reduce steaming though not abolish it.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Such a measure received the consent of the employers and a bill was introduced on June 27th 1889; the Royal Assent was given on August 30th, the provisions to take effect from March 1st 1890. A scale of humidity in weaving sheds was thus created.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Birtwistle and Holmes, who had carried out the main negotiations on behalf of the United Textile Factory workers Association (as the Factory Acts Reform Association was by now called), admitted to their members that they had not gained all that was required although the new Act was called "a capital instalment" by the Cotton Factory Times.⁽⁷⁰⁾ There was no guarantee, however, that the regulations could be enforced since the factory inspectorate was inadequate. The rank and file of the Weavers' Amalgamation was, of course, bitterly disappointed. Discontent was evident throughout the summer and winter of 1889 and was not placated by Birtwistle's assurance that the new Act would prove to be "an excellent piece of legislation". Great Harwood Weavers' Association threatened strike action but the Amalgamation said it would lend no support.⁽⁷¹⁾ The Textile

Factory Workers' Conference of 1890 produced heated discussions on the administration of the Act, several delegates complaining that weavers were worse off than before. Some thought that too high a degree of humidity was permitted. A motion, sponsored by Blackburn Weavers, attacked the "wholesale violation of the Act".⁽⁷²⁾ Complaints continued to be heard for many months afterwards; weavers establishing a new society at Kirkham were told by Luke Park of Preston Weavers' Society in September 1890 that the Act was "not worth the paper it was printed upon" and were urged not to work in sheds where steaming was carried out.⁽⁷³⁾ Even the loyalist Cotton Factory Times attacked the employers' "deliberate intention...not to comply with the law".⁽⁷⁴⁾ Over two years after the passing of the original Act a meeting at Blackburn was demanding that total abolition of steaming be sought afresh.⁽⁷⁵⁾ It is therefore not wholly correct to say that "criticism died down once the new regulations came into force."⁽⁷⁶⁾ Discontent over steaming was in part the cause of Great Harwood Weavers' secession from the Weavers' Amalgamation in 1892;⁽⁷⁷⁾ in fact criticism never died down, but carried on throughout the next twenty years.⁽⁷⁸⁾

The steaming agitation and its consequences raised serious problems about the continuation of cotton union lobbying and the acceptance of leadership policy by the rank and file. In 1890 the political machinery of the cotton unions had been placed on a permanent basis, the United Textile Factory Workers' Association, with a democratic United Council, elected according to membership

from the three major unions, and an executive Legislative Council. (79) Its objects were:

"...the removal of any grievance from which its members may be suffering for which Parliamentary or Governmental influence is required." (80)

During the 1890's this body attempted to secure reforms and regulations in the working conditions of millhands, including greater working space, more ventilation in mills, better sanitation, fencing in of machinery, an increase in annual holidays and the ceasing of all work in mills at noon on Saturdays. Some success was achieved, notably in the Factory Act of 1891 which included a "particulars clause", a regulation that employers must give specific details of work required from weavers in order to guarantee the correct payment of their wages. (81)

Over many issues, however, the employers proved obstructive; their fear was that factory reform would place Lancashire at a disadvantage against India and other producers, whose labour force was under-paid and over-worked. (82) At the same time there was little that deputations from the cotton unions could do in face of a majority in the House even if most Lancashire members agreed to support them; when the "particulars clause" was won, for instance, the cotton unions had to accept, in the same bill, a signal rebuttal of their claims over the halftime labour question, since a majority of members voted for an increase in the school leaving age which would delay the time when juveniles could commence half-time work in factories. (83)

In general the lobbying tactics employed by the Textile Factory Workers in the 1890's involved a great deal of work for a small amount of success. At the end of the 1891 conference Birtwistle read a letter to the delegates; it was from Henry James, Liberal Unionist M.P. for Bury and one of the cotton workers' foremost supporters in the Commons:

"The proceedings of the Session.....brought prominently to my attention the great difficulty existing under present circumstances for fully placing the views of the Textile Factory Operatives before the House of Commons. I do not wish to refer more than I can avoid to the poor services I have endeavoured to render to the Operatives. Still, I must state that whilst I have done my best, I frequently felt the drawback under which I labour in consequence of having no technical knowledge of the incidents attaching to labour in a textile factory".

"I need not dwell on the great advantage derived by those who are engaged in certain industrial occupations by being directly represented in the House of Commons".

"Everyone knows, for instance, how the miners have benefited from the presence in Parliament of the able men who have sprung from their ranks and that benefit is shared by the public with the classes directly represented".

"But it seems strange that the textile factory operatives (numbering I believe some 125,000 persons) whose interests you and Mr. Mawdsley, in conjunction with others, have so ably represented in Conference, have no direct representation and I feel strongly that they would do well for their own interests if they endeavoured to secure the presence of one of their own body in the House of Commons". (84)

Sir Henry James was clearly thinking in terms of labour representation by the cotton unions and three factors suggested that this might be the logical outcome of their work. Firstly, the unions had been led irrevocably to an acceptance of

Parliament's importance in the working class struggle, and as James had pointed out their policies would be the better implemented by work from the inside, by cotton union experts in the House. In the second place, lobbying had shown the immense superiority of the employer in Parliament; whilst the unions were striving for equality between worker and master at local level they were forced to submit to a legislative imbalance which blocked progress at Westminster. The seemingly reasonable demands made over the steaming question, backed by public opinion, had been rejected by middle class Members who were not prepared to consider the vast majority of their constituents when economic interest was at stake. Thirdly, and in consequence, the same sort of anti-employer reaction as found a political outlet in the mining towns in 1892 had no outlet in the cotton towns. The union leadership continued to inhibit political expression but there were many workers in the districts who were ready to listen to, and accept the lead of, socialists.

2. The Eight Hours Day

The tensions which were growing evident among the cotton workers in the early 1890's were further aroused by the Eight Hours Day issue. The principles involved in the restriction of working hours had some basis in socialist philosophy, although, as has been pointed out, they were readily accepted by some non-socialist mining unions because they accorded with industrial conditions. The cotton union leaders, however, would not agree so easily to the idea; there was very little pressure in the cotton towns before the early 1890's for an Eight Hour Day, partly

because socialist infiltration before then had been slight but, more important, because of the position of the cotton trade. Like many established unions those of the cotton industry were prepared to give the question of reduced hours some thought during periods of bad trade; Luke Park of Preston Weavers, for instance, had supported a shorter working day at the Trades Union Congress in 1885 ⁽⁸⁵⁾ but in general there was a fear of curtailing hours lest it place Lancashire in an unfavourable position in the foreign market. ⁽⁸⁶⁾ If the price of goods did not rise then wages would have to fall, since the operatives worked on a piecework system.

The union leadership was vitally interested in maintaining the world supremacy of the Lancashire cotton industry and felt that by supporting economic reformism of this nature it might be jeopardising its position with the employers. Consequently the Textile Factory Workers were unwilling to consider Eight Hours outside an international framework: "If all the workmen in the world were united in one grand union the business could be settled at once!" ⁽⁸⁷⁾ This attitude immediately set the cotton unions at variance with the more advanced sections of the Labour movement.

At the 1887 Trades Union Congress at Swansea it had been decided to put the Eight Hours question before trade unionists in the form of a plebiscite; the basic questions to be answered were whether a universal law should be supported or whether each union should choose to negotiate independently for restriction. ⁽⁸⁸⁾

By chance, Mawdsley and Birtwistle, as members of the Parliamentary Committee, were in charge of the ballot procedure; both were antipathetic towards its general aims and made nothing more than informal approaches to the unions; Mawdsley advised the Congress of 1888 that the matter should be dropped or steps taken to "obtain more information".⁽⁸⁹⁾ The Spinners' Amalgamation had flatly refused to put the question to a vote.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Nonetheless, on the motion of Keir Hardie the 1888 Congress decided that the plebiscite must be carried out⁽⁹¹⁾ and Mawdsley was unable to avoid an awkward situation.

At this time relations between the cotton unions and the Trades Union Congress were strained. The Parliamentary Committee had been a disappointing ally in the Weavers' Amalgamation's demands for factory reform and though David Holmes had made many speeches at Congress on factory inspectors, steaming and the adulteration of yarns, the questions of Labour representation and Eight Hours were taking up much of the delegates' time and attention, rendering the Congress immobile in the matter of the Weavers' grievances. The Cotton Factory Times was prompted to raise doubts about the worth of the Congress: "its chief object now seems to be the personal advance of a few at the expense of the many," complained a leader of 1887, adding that the time spent on "extraneous subjects not applicable to trade unions" raised the question of whether "it would not be prudent that these yearly Congresses should be discontinued".⁽⁹²⁾

The pattern of events was clearly leading to a confrontation, which came in 1890 at the Liverpool Congress. At the previous Congress in Dundee Mawdsley had presented a simplified report on the Eight Hours ballot which gave an impression of general hostility to the idea of restriction.⁽⁹³⁾ Bailey, of the Nottingham Miners, accused Mawdsley of being obviously prejudiced and of "muddling" the whole affair, since he had not reported the decisions of Bailey's own union. Even James Billington, the Tory Secretary of Preston Spinners, supported Eight Hours against Mawdsley and the Lancashire Miners secured support for a Miners Eight Hours Bill.⁽⁹⁴⁾

At Liverpool the socialist trade unions made a concerted effort to change the policy of Congress and succeeded in securing the acceptance of a motion which called for an Eight Hours Day by law. David Holmes had vigorously defended Lancashire's position, conceding the idea of trade option but flatly rejecting a universal law. In spite of the upswing in trade at this time the cotton union leaders took the decision badly; Birtwistle resigned his seat on the Parliamentary Committee after consultation with other cotton union officials.⁽⁹⁵⁾ Even before the Congress met the executive committee of the Spinners' Amalgamation, sensing what was in the wind, had demanded Mawdsley's withdrawal from the Parliamentary Committee because of "the illegal and foolish action of the Trades Union Congress".⁽⁹⁶⁾ Following a further

request in September 1890 Mawdsley followed Birtwistle. Both actions were supported by the General Council of the Weavers' Amalgamation.⁽⁹⁷⁾

At the end of 1890, therefore, the cotton unions were completely isolated from the rest of the labour movement. Although both Birtwistle and Mawdsley returned to the Parliamentary Committee the next year relations between the cotton unions and the Congress continued to be of a fractious nature; cotton union delegates were increasingly attacked on new fronts, principally over the half time labour question. An additional source of conflict was to arise within the Textile Factory Workers' Association itself, especially with the decline in trade after 1892. Birtwistle affirmed that "no thinking cotton operative would dream of supporting the Eight Hours Bill"⁽⁹⁸⁾ but the question had not been raised with the rank and file, whilst the action of the leadership had been plainly autocratic.

The next two years brought a significant change of position. Foreign competition had been the barrier to the progress of Eight Hours in the eyes of Holmes, Birtwistle and Mawdsley, who calculated that wages would fall by 15 per cent if hours were reduced⁽⁹⁹⁾. The campaign over steaming had created conflict with the employers which the union leaders were unwilling to escalate. "Go to the Government and ask the Government to pass a Factory Act for India somewhere near what ours is at home" David Holmes had advised in 1890.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ On the other hand these arguments were beginning to be questioned by socialists; Sidney Webb, the Fabian lecturer, claimed

to have dismissed them; it was in areas where hours were short, such as Massachusetts, said Webb, that Lancashire should fear competition most, since these were the most dangerous rivals for markets.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ He called the arguments used by the union leaders "a mere pretext".⁽¹⁰²⁾ Nonetheless the question remained undebated by the Amalgamations during 1891 whilst the campaign for Eight Hours grew stronger among the local societies of north east Lancashire, led by the socialists who were now beginning to win considerable support.

During 1891 and 1892 industrial relations in the cotton industry deteriorated; there was a general lock out in south east Lancashire in 1892 following a "bad spinning" dispute at the Stalybridge Spinning Company; most of the mill workers in the area were locked out and almost sixteen million spindles stopped.⁽¹⁰³⁾ The situation was not improved when a settlement was negotiated in Stalybridge, for although the Spinners' Amalgamation had allowed the employers to "re-employ all the old hands they can find work for" many non-unionists were taken on and clashes took place between workers at Hyde and Dukinfield whilst many local societies passed resolutions condemning the action of the Spinners' executive committee.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Following almost immediately afterwards came the general spinning lock-out of 1892-93, longer in duration though not involving so many workers.

3. Summary

The poor trade of these years was leading towards a crucial period in the development of working class politics in the cotton towns. The work of the Social Democratic

Federation at Burnley was beginning to provide an alternative policy to that of the union leadership and the acceptance of socialist policies by trade unionists seemed a complete possibility. With this situation might come drastic change in the extent of the cotton union participation in politics.

Yet even before the socialists began to exploit trade union discontent in the cotton towns it is certain that a change was taking place in cotton union attitudes. The experiences of factory reform were beginning to show the value of having Labour representatives to press the unions' case; at the same time the disputes over Eight Hours not only prepared the ground for the socialists in the cotton towns by revealing the extent to which the union leadership was out of step with the rest of the labour movement, but they also showed how important political representation was to achieve working class demands.

It should now be possible to contrast the positions of these two groups of workers, as they stood by the mid 'nineties. Clearly, both were moving in the same general direction, but by significantly different routes. Whilst both were now accepting the need for a political commitment on the part of their unions, the cotton workers were really only at the stage the unions had passed through during the mid 1880's: they were making the breakthrough into parliamentary politics. There was still no suggestion by the cotton unions that they regarded political action as anything more than opportunist and it is hardly surprising that contemporaries found it difficult to conceive of the cotton unions as the organisational basis for a working class political movement. On the other hand, the miners were by now

operating within a national pressure group - the MFGB - which had become a more or less regular feature of working class politics. Moreover, in Lancashire the miners were beginning to realise the need for an independent political position. A sagacious observer of 1895 would have known which group was the more likely to make the running in independent working class politics.

THE SOCIALIST SYNTHESIS

It is now time to consider the part played by the two socialist societies - the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party - in the beginnings of working class political independence. Compared with the narrow aims of local labour representation and the sectional interests of the big trade unions the S.D.F. and the I.L.P. provided a universal theory for working class action. Both parties saw the working class in social, as well as political, terms; they hoped ultimately to proceed to a new social order in which the state would be organised for the workers' benefit. Socialism therefore provided a synthesis that would bring together all forms of working class energy and aim them at the social goal. Of course, the S.D.F. and the I.L.P. had to convince the working class of the value of this approach and for this reason their intention was always to convert as many people as possible to the cause - to make socialists. They soon discovered, however, that this was a slow process; working class political and industrial behaviour was too well established for it to be rejected in favour of socialist leadership. As a result both parties had to attempt some form of compromise with existing working class institutions, especially the trade unions, and guide them in new directions.

A THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

English socialism in the early 1880's was well below the

political horizon, being confined chiefly to cosmopolitan centres which had links with the continent through emigré socialists. London was the focal point of the most important activity and was the birthplace of the Social Democratic Federation.⁽¹⁾ The introduction of socialism to Lancashire took place in 1884 when the S.D.F. opened a branch at Blackburn. Social democracy was therefore not a spontaneous growth within the region, but rather a grafted political limb. And because the S.D.F. was not a product of Lancashire's social background it was consequently slow to develop as an integral part of the working class movement. Yet growth and influence were not beyond the capabilities of the S.D.F. and it proved resilient enough to survive its initial disadvantages.

1.2 Early Days

The S.D.F. was attracted to Blackburn by a weavers' strike in the winter of 1883-84; in the hope of exploiting working class discontent, and establishing provincial branches, the S.D.F. Executive Council sent three of its ablest propagandists, Jack Williams, James MacDonald and J.L. Joynes, to distribute socialist literature and give lectures in the town. The work seemed so promising that in February 1884 H.M. Hyndman, under whose inspiration the S.D.F. had been established,⁽²⁾ and William Morris, the socialist artist and craftsman, visited Blackburn to supervise the setting up of a permanent branch.⁽³⁾ By August the branch was reporting a healthy position and a growing demand for the S.D.F.'s weekly journal, Justice.

The movement spread promisingly; at the beginning of 1885 there were agencies for Justice in about five Lancashire towns and besides the Blackburn social democrats, who were meeting each week in a local temperance hotel, a vigorous group had been organised among the gas stokers and railwaymen of Salford. The latter's missionary zeal carried them to Oldham and neighbouring districts where they regularly held outdoor meetings. (4) But this was the fullest extent of early growth; the failure to develop more rapidly and extensively may be accounted for by two principal factors.

In the first place Lancashire branches were very much dependent at this stage on assistance from London for experienced lecturers and propagandists. But in London the S.D.F. was experiencing quarrels among its leadership which eventually resulted in the secession of a discontented group led by William Morris and the establishment of a new rival party, the Socialist League, in December 1884. In addition the problems encountered by the S.D.F. in contesting three parliamentary elections in 1885 with "Tory Gold" had brought the movement into disrepute, causing a decline in membership. (5) Whilst Lancashire was not directly involved in these events the lack of attention was clearly felt in the region. (6)

Secondly, and more important, the S.D.F.'s attitude towards trade unions raised serious problems about its future in the region. The extensive support enjoyed by trade unions in Lancashire ensured that a substantial proportion of the working

class was already organised on an industrial basis before the advent of socialism; unlike some of its continental counterparts the S.D.F. was not in a position to take over the sole leadership in working class politics (although in London the comparative weakness of trade unionism probably enhanced the S.D.F.'s position). In Lancashire social democrats had either to co-operate with trade unionists and face a possible weakening of their socialist principles, or attempt to convert the unions to socialism. In fact the problem was not fully dealt with either way in early years mainly because of Hyndman's influence. His brand of Marxism was in general opposed to the trade union structure, which permitted only a section of the more affluent workers, the "Labour aristocracy", to improve its economic position in society through combination. Trade unionism had little to offer the great mass of economically depressed people before the new unionist boom of the late 1880's, and it was therefore with some justification that Hyndman wrote in the mid 'eighties: "never in my memory was the misery among the very poor so serious as it is today".⁽⁷⁾

Most of the early encounters between social democrats and trade unionists in Lancashire took place with this kind of attitude dominating S.D.F. thinking. Among the earliest reports of propagandists from Blackburn were vituperative attacks on the unions in the spinning and weaving trades.⁽⁸⁾ Justice's first full statement on trade unionism was argued by H. H. Champion, a former regular soldier; ⁽⁹⁾ he spoke of the unions' incapacity to deal with the problem of trade depression and unemployment; he attacked their sectionalism and rivalry; he suggested a grand,

universal union which reflected his aims for working class unity, urging the organised artisans to join hands with "the men and women who suffer". (10)

In their desire to sweep all the internal divisions within the working class the social democrats therefore chose to ignore trade unionism, hoping that a massive appeal to class consciousness would render such organisations useless. It was only in the later 'eighties, when the S.D.F. actually began to recruit members who were trade unionists, that attitudes in Lancashire changed.

During the poor trade of the middle 1880's the S.D.F.'s main emphasis was placed on unemployed agitation. A great deal of energy was expended in this work. Again, the London outlook shaped S.D.F. tactics in Lancashire. For the General Election of 1885 a reformist programme had been devised to win votes (11) but with the discredit brought upon the movement by parliamentary methods the S.D.F. shifted its stress to direct action: to win support by outdoor propaganda. During the winter of 1885-86 demonstrations of the unemployed had been held in London ending with the riots of February 1886 when leading S.D.F. figures were arraigned before the Bow Street magistrates. (12) Exactly a week later the S.D.F. produced a manifesto calling attention to the need for unemployment remedies, the basic arguments of which were a curtailment in the hours of labour to eight a day and the provision of public works to absorb the unemployed; the result, it was alleged, would then make the proletariat a viable economic

force able to spend rather than merely subsist. (13)

Lancashire branches seized the opportunity to exploit these arguments by means of outdoor propaganda. Since the initial outbursts of 1884 little had happened in the region; an unsuccessful attempt had been made to work among the miners during the period of wage reductions in 1884, (14) and William Morris had made equally fruitless forays for the Socialist League during the Oldham strike of 1885, speaking to the workers on trade depression and the capitalist economy. (15) Not until well into 1887 did the Salford S.D.F. achieve some influence by organising big demonstrations of the unemployed in Manchester, urging the City Council to "organise the Labour of the unemployed upon useful and productive work at fair rates of wages by carrying out necessary local improvements". They went on to demand the demolition of bad housing, the building of sound workers' cottages, a more generous poor relief and an eight hours day. (16)

During 1886 and 1887 this was the character of Salford S.D.F.'s work; it met with some success because trade was generally bad and the alleged evils of capitalism readily apparent; moreover, Manchester and Salford were not areas of very strong trade unionism and some workers were willing to seize on the obvious attractions of socialism. Consequently the S.D.F. was able to pursue constant agitation and managed to establish branches at Rochdale and Bolton. Speakers would travel from Salford on Sundays to impress their often large audiences with the need for

the nationalisation of the means of production and for short term reforms, or "palliatives", which Hyndman had termed "stepping stones to a happier period".⁽¹⁷⁾ Nevertheless there seemed little immediate chance of achieving remedies, still less of social revolution, in this way; for although audiences were often encouraging in working class districts there were few prepared to commit themselves to the movement. Branch membership remained very low and the S.D.F. needed active militants. Jack Williams, a small round-shouldered Cockney who was one of the S.D.F.'s toughest speakers, soon found that in Lancashire large audiences were often made up of many casual onlookers; at Rochdale in 1887 he addressed a gathering of almost two thousand but found only twenty prepared to come forward afterwards to join the S.D.F. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Clearly, new methods were required. Hyndman had suggested that political electioneering might again be attempted as a useful means of propaganda ⁽¹⁹⁾ and the first Lancashire branch to contest a municipal election was that at Bolton, which had received some support from local workers during the Iron Strike of 1887. The Executive Council sent the S.D.F. Treasurer, John Hunter-Watts, to Bolton in mid 1887 to improve organisation; Watts was a colourful figure and a keen worker, though "rather anarchistic in temperament" ⁽²⁰⁾ and certainly not as influential a leader as Tom Mann, who arrived at Bolton about the same time. Mann was an unemployed engineer who had written a pamphlet the previous year on the Eight Hours Day; he opposed his union's

leaders but retained a strong conviction in trade union methods, perhaps the most steadfast conviction he held throughout a long and active life in many different working class causes. (21)

Mann spoke warmly in 1887 of the Bolton socialists' enthusiasm in his reports to Justice and it was most likely Mann who persuaded the branch to put forward six S.D.F. candidates in the 1887 municipal elections and ask for the support of the local Trades Council. (22) This was an enlightened move to bring together labour forces and it was not the S.D.F.'s fault that the proposition was rejected, for it was the Trades Council which seemed suspicious of the new socialist group. (23) In the event all the socialist candidates, campaigning in strong working class Tory wards, were defeated.

The branch was also weakened by internal divisions which were at work below a placid surface; in 1888 a member wrote to Justice: "it is quite plain that our movement in Bolton is safe"; classes were being held in economics, elocution and singing (24) but this was far from a true reflection of the party's condition. Mann's reports reveal that it was in a parlous condition. He himself was in complete disagreement with certain "impossibilist" elements in the London S.D.F. and was equally critical of Lancashire tactics, especially as directed by Hunter-Watts. Mann diverted his attention for a time to the branches at Blackburn and Darwen, whose satisfactory progress he reported. (25) But in a detailed letter to John Burns, his socialist colleague from Battersea, Mann outlined the Bolton disputes and gave his

reasons for leaving Lancashire at the end of 1888. As a valued propagandist he had been installed in a tobacconist's shop which, with an income of twenty five shillings a week subscribed by other S.D.F. branches in Lancashire, was to provide an income for himself and his family of five. For this arrangement Mann had largely to thank a local socialist shoemaker, Joe Shuttlebotham. Difficulties arose when a section of the Bolton branch decided to start a socialist workshop, calling it the "Co-operative Commonwealth". Mann wrote:

".....This proved to be a very great hindrance to the progress of the branch and in a short time partly owing to a less vigorous propaganda resulting from members devoting time to what they thought was the practical side of Socialism, the membership soon began to decrease, considerable dissensions arose in the branch and at nearly every meeting quarrels took place. I took no part in them, but turned my attention to other branches and did my best to develop Blackburn and Darwen branches. The Blackburn men will testify that as a result they became respected where they had formerly had to be constantly ready for fisticuff work and Darwen developed even better. Being asked in October to go to Northwich for the Labour Party (26) I at once consented subject to agreeing with the committee at Bolton and made several visits there. I also went to Bradford during the Trades Congress week. At this time I was using up to the 25/- a week and the shop was not paying its way partly because J. Hunter Watts had promised Shuttlebotham of Bolton, when asked by him, to stand good if need be to the extent of £20 for stock; on the strength of this the place was taken, and when the time arrived, no money save £2 was forthcoming from Watts, so the men at Bolton and one or two others made sufficient to get a small stock which had to be continually laid out again as soon as brought in - no rent was saved accordingly and when the first quarter rent was due I had to get two £5 loans and commence to pay them back by weekly instalments. I was still doing this when the next became due, ditto the next, and of course had to borrow as I continued to spend the full 25/- weekly on the family. When the cold weather set in the 25/- was not forthcoming - only a part of it; and we were put to great straits. I had had complete control of Justice during this period and I increased the sale considerably; when they were profits, I had them as part of the shop

takings, when losses I bore them. The dissensions previously alluded developing caused a proportionate falling off of sale and for several weeks running I had the bother of the papers and considerable monetary loss also. Ultimately I told the Committee definitely that they must take charge of the paper so that they would realise the necessity of either purchasing it or ordering less; this had been used on the Council as a sign of my animosity to the S.D.F. - the only reason of my refusal to sell being the one I have given.

Now with respect to Darwen I was always on the most cordial terms of friendship with them and they asked me to be present on Christmas Eve and make a speech at a supper they intended having. I had occasion to go to Stockton-on-Tees during the election there, and while there received two very earnest requests from the Newcastle men to go over on the Sunday Dec. 23 and lecture for them: I should very much have liked to have done this but although only 40 miles from there as I had already proposed Darwen to speak for them on this Sunday and the following evening I refused Newcastle and went to Darwen as arranged. My relationships were of the most friendly nature but as I had been to Stockton for the N.L.E.A. (27) some of the friends asked me concerning the policy of the same and of course I chatted upon it and one of them named Farren asked that he should be supplied with a few papers. This is the great offence of which I have been guilty. The Darwen Sec., a young energetic fellow with the best of intentions, I suppose became incensed that any other paper than Justice should be read and wrote to Bridge saying that I had weaned some of their members & C.

The net result of my being in Lancashire is that for the first time in my life I now owe a money debt of £15, which I am trying to pay at 2/6 per week - but stand a real risk of having my goods siezed. This then is what I have gained monetarily, though as for gaining a little experience, it may be worth it....."(28)

Bolton S.D.F. might have taken a lead in Lancashire socialism but differences over tactics and a chronic shortage of money prevented efficient organisation. After Mann's departure the branch collapsed; it was re-organised by Joe Shufflebotham in August 1890 and in the following year Shufflebotham himself

secured election as a social democrat to the Bolton School Board (29); this was an isolated success and the S.D.F. was never again active in the town. Yet in two important ways the Bolton S.D.F. branch under Tom Mann had pointed out a realistic course for social democrats: municipal electioneering and a trade union alliance.

2. Into Trade Union Work

Early in 1888 Lancashire was created a separate district of the Federation, incorporating about eight branches. Hunter-Watts was more or less in charge of propaganda but, though William Morris was full of praise for his efforts, (30) progress was very slow. The bulk of the work comprised outdoor meetings, the highlight of which was a mass rally at Blackstone Edge on Spa Sunday, 1888, addressed by Hyndman and several social democrats from Lancashire towns. (31) Such meetings were repeated in following years (32) but brought little more than fiery speeches denouncing society. In 1888 it seemed that five years of propaganda had brought no tangible gains.

Events began to change with the new unionism of 1889. Unskilled workers were willing to accept socialist help in the establishing of unions and in turn the S.D.F. began to find willing audiences among the new unionists, and so there developed a closer tie between social democrats and trade unionists. At Darwen William Atkinson, a veteran of the original branch at Blackburn, helped to organise a Carters' and Lorrymen's union in the late 'eighties; in 1890 he was appointed president of the

Paper Stainers' Union and also became Secretary of the Local Trades Council in 1893.⁽³³⁾ The Salford socialists proved more active; they were at the centre of the gasworkers' agitation in 1889 and it was upon the new union that the South Salford S.D.F. built its support. In 1888 a socialist gas stoker, Horrocks, had come within fifteen votes of winning Ordsall ward, a working class district in the industrial centre of Salford; the following spring saw a Salford social democrat elected to the post of County Council auditor.⁽³⁴⁾ South Salford branch became an active centre in Labour politics with an able propagandist in W.K. Hall, a miner with an ascetic appearance and a cool, argumentative speaking style.⁽³⁵⁾ A new branch was opened in the more socially mixed area of north Salford, while the older branch moved into larger premises to accommodate the growing following. In other towns S.D.F. branches were moving gradually into municipal politics, formulating programmes of social reform which supplemented rather than replaced trade union aims.⁽³⁶⁾ It was noticeable that progress was more rapid in areas where the S.D.F. could influence trade union development : at Barrow, for instance, the local social democrats gained a seat on the school board in 1890, although in the quite different industrial town of Rochdale three S.D.F. candidates for municipal honour were disastrously defeated.⁽³⁷⁾

With the move towards more conventional political practices it was evident that some kind of alliance of Labour forces was needed. By itself the S.D.F. was too weak an

organisation to profit from the increased interest in Labour representation; lack of money was still a major barrier to the establishment of branches and it proved much easier to set up new ones than to sustain existing ones. Yet there was still one high card to play. The S.D.F.'s most original contribution to working class politics lay in its ideology, which provided for the first time in Lancashire a distinct policy for Labour action at both parliamentary and municipal levels. Many of the S.D.F.'s ideas derived from H.M. Hyndman's book England For All (1881), which placed emphasis on decentralisation in English government.⁽³⁸⁾ The localised work of the trades councils in the 1880's had not exploited the field of municipal reform sufficiently and the S.D.F. plainly had the opportunity to shape attitudes if it could exert political pressure.

The early 1890's was a time of greatly increased interest in labour politics. During 1891 the S.D.F. broke out of its hitherto predominantly south east Lancashire base by winning support in the quickly growing weaving towns of the north east, whose workers supplied the backbone of Lancashire radicalism. Herbert Burrows, a London Socialist who had helped to organise the matchgirls' strike at Bryant and May's in 1888-9, had a hand in starting an S.D.F. branch at Nelson during a speaking tour of 1891.⁽³⁹⁾ In the following summer Hyndman followed a similar route, speaking at Salford, Burnley and Nelson. At the same time independent Labour parties were springing up in the

region and prospects of a united Labour movement in the Manchester region seemed good. (40) The socialist synthesis was beginning to develop alternatives. - the orthodoxy of the S.D.F. against the less socialist politics of the "independent labour" platform.

This was a crucial time in the development of the S.D.F. Was it to join with the I.L.P. or maintain an independent course? In 1890 the Federation had laid plans to contest the forthcoming General Election but the number of candidates intended was reduced when Hyndman lost money as a result of dealings on the Stock Exchange. (41) One of the three parliamentary candidates eventually sponsored was W. K Hall at South Salford. The growth of Labour groups in the area has been discussed in Chapter Four, where it was seen that by 1892 there were three distinct movements: the Liberal Labourites, supported mainly by the Trades Council and some new unions such as John Kelly's Carters; the I.L.P. centred on the Clarion group; and the S.D.F. When the Salford Labour Union was constituted late in 1891 many of the local social democrats expressed a keen interest in its work and Hall was in turn given encouraging support by some of its members in his campaign. Many of the social democrats in Salford conceived of their party's future within the new I.L.P. and Hall toured neighbouring towns as part of his election campaign speaking in support of I.L.P. action. (42) The value of this course seemed to be strengthened by the outcome of Hall's campaign.

South Salford division, with a high working class population, was a marginally Conservative seat, though the Liberals had won

there in 1885. It had² considerable, though badly organised, Irish votes; its population had been composed of workers in the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway workshops and stokers in the Municipal gasworks, although the construction of the Manchester Ship canal, whose terminus was to be in the area, had brought many casual labourers into the division. It was a constituency which required diligent and assiduous registration work. Hall expounded a moderate, radical programme, supporting Home Rule for Ireland, old age pensions and the payment of M.P.s, but this was largely duplicated by the Liberal candidate. (43) Hall's defeat was a humiliating one (44) which was not entirely occasioned, as Justice believed, (45) by Liberal opposition. Poor organisation was the main cause. The effect of the defeat was also important, for it completed the secession of many social democrats, who went over to the I.L.P. and left the South Salford branch seriously depleted, with only two figures of any consequences in the local Labour movement - Tabbron of the Brassfounders and Tom Purves, who was later to organise a branch of the Dockers in Salford. This marked the end of the S.D.F. as an effective force in Manchester politics for with the subsequent success of the I.L.P. there was little incentive to join a narrowly based socialist party and by the turn of the century the branch had faded into obscurity. In changing its tactics to promote the Labour Alliance the S.D.F. appeared thereby to be losing its separate identity.

3. Progress in North East Lancashire

The S.D.F. still had some influence in north east Lancashire, however, and events here were to prove the party's continued vitality. Depression and discontent in the cotton towns during the two years following the 1892 General Election provided the conditions for growth; these were exploited by able organisation. The initial success of the Burnley branch in winning a School Board election soon after its foundation ⁶(48) prompted the Executive Council to send Joe Terrett to the area in order to encourage the development of new branches. Terrett (who used the name "A.G. Wolfe" when working in Lancashire) was a young man from the Forest of Dean. When his parents moved to London he had worked in Smithfield Market and became a socialist at the age of seventeen after witnessing the strikes of dockers and gasworkers in 1889. Terrett was a keen trade unionist and joined Will Thorne's Gasworkers, but always felt more at home lecturing for the S.D.F. and Fabian Society, organising new branches and tramping the countryside from town to town, often walking miles to avoid the cost of rail fares. (47) He had taken to the provinces about 1892 and arrived in Burnley in January 1893. Terrett was soon assisted there by a full time branch secretary, Dan Irving. Almost 20 years older than Terrett, Irving was in his forties when he came to Burnley and already had experienced a colourful life; he had been a railwayman at Bristol but lost a leg in an accident; he had organised a branch of the Gasworkers' Union in the city and had been a prominent working class radical who originally opposed the socialists but later joined them. After helping to run a socialist colony at Starnthwaite

he was invited to join the S.D.F. in Burnley;⁽⁴⁸⁾ thus he began a long connection with the town whose M.P. he was to become at the end of his long life.

By the middle of 1893 the S.D.F. had 600 members at Burnley. Efficient organisation was the keynote of the branch:

"A committee of 36 members was appointed and this committee was divided into twelve 3's; three for each ward of the town. The duty of these three members is to go to private addresses of each member of the Party in the ward to collect his weekly subscription and to leave his copy of Justice. Incidentally, a deal of information is obtained. Each collector is provided with a book in which he notes whether the subscribing member is a member of the Weavers' Association or the Co-operative Society. By means of this information, and industriously whipping up the members, the S.D.F. has been able to place Socialists upon the Committee of the Weavers' Association and also upon the committee of the Co-operative Society".⁽⁴⁹⁾

Another vital factor in creating support was the Burnley Socialist and North East Lancashire Labour News, a weekly journal edited by J.R. Widdup, a local man and a founder member of the branch. The Burnley Socialist was an open challenge to the established press, being devoted completely to socialist propaganda; it claimed a circulation among an estimated two thousand socialists in the Burnley and Nelson area, and at the same time helped to keep the exploits of the S.D.F. before the public.

The political influence of the S.D.F. in the district came from its relations with trade unionists. Socialist members of the Weavers' societies were beginning to shape cotton union policy in an important direction. The leaders of the three major amalgamations opposed the Eight Hour Day in the debates of 1890 and 1891⁽⁵⁰⁾ but Burnley S.D.F. made its position on restriction of hours plain.⁽⁵¹⁾

David Holmes, whose stature as a radical in his own town of Burnley was immense, remained as one of the most vigorous opponents of socialist policy, upholding the arguments he had presented with other leading cotton trade unionists when giving evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour in 1891. (52) Yet the effects of declining trade and the Stalybridge lock-out of 1892 prompted even the Cotton Factory Times to consider means of putting "the overstocked market right" (53) and whilst Nelson Weavers had in 1891 been urging an international effort on Eight Hours (54) the journal of the cotton trade finally decided that "what cotton operatives do in other countries will have to be abandoned from all consideration, and what is requisite in this country will have to take its place". (55)

By the summer of 1892, though Holmes continued to speak against it (56), the Burnley and Nelson Weavers' Associations had mandates for the Eight Hour Day, the original motions having been put by socialists. (57) In August the U.T.F.W.A. decided by a majority of 132 to 21 to support a legal Eight Hour Day; the plan had received support from the major societies in the spinning trade. (58) The issue had undoubtedly been forced by the poor trade and by the employers' intentions of pressing for a wage reduction, but the agitation had been stimulated by the S.D.F.

As a result socialist credit in the weaving towns rose, assisting the development of the S.D.F. at Burnley and bringing

political gains; in 1893 John Markham of the S.D.F. became the Weavers' Vice-President, displacing the radical Robert Pollard; among the Burnley Miners' Association John Sparling became a prominent socialist official and in the same year the social democrat James Roberts was chosen secretary of the Trades Council. (59)

It was trade union support that brought political success; at the Burnley municipal elections in 1893 two socialist democrats were returned, John Sparling and John Tempest, the latter of the Twisters' and Drawers' union. (60) Five candidates had been sponsored with an extensive programme of municipal reform designed to catch the working class vote. (61) "THE TWO POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE COMBINED to prevent the return of Labour candidates", claimed the Burnley Socialist, adding "we hope that you will at once become alive to this fact and AS WORKERS ALSO COMBINE to further YOUR interests, and send men pledged to a definite Labour programme". (62) There had been no formal agreement with the Trades Council and in one contest candidates of the two groups clashed, but it was clear that the S.D.F. had an important role to play in working class politics; in 1893 it was possible that a socialist led Labour Party might be engineered. For one thing the coalmining lock-out which had started in the last week of July (63) had unified feelings; the cotton workers shared the distress of the miners as many local mills were closed through shortage of fuel. (64) The Workman's Times commented:

"Comrade A. G. Wolfe took advantage of the miners' holidays by holding afternoon meetings and so popular and effective has he permeated socialism (sic) in the miners that they not only voted for us, but worked with an enthusiasm and determination never excelled". (65)

The S.D.F. had shown itself capable of agitating for and of securing labour representation, but if this progress was not maintained it was largely because of disunity in the Labour movement. In spite of socialist influence in the local unions radicalism had not been displaced.. Whilst the S.D.F. had been able to carry through its industrial policy on the Eight Hour Day, stimulating political action was a different matter. The Weavers' Association had twice refused to entertain the question of Labour candidates in 1892, once following a move by Nelson S.D.F. to bring out a parliamentary candidate for the Clitheroe division. (66) A more impressive radical reaction came in 1894 after the S.D.F., by astute packing of audiences, had managed to pass a motion in the Weavers for having labour candidates at municipal elections, and for removing from the control of the Committee the choice of delegates to attend the Trades Union Congress. (67) Two Liberal members of the Weavers' committee - Pollard and Riddiough - complained that the union was being used to enact "affairs emanating from St. James Hall" (the S.D.F. office in Burnley). Through concerted radical intervention the desired effect of the S.D.F. resolutions was not achieved; though the Weavers could not withdraw from their committed course of political action the two candidates eventually selected were both radicals and received Trades Council support. The rift between what might be termed the right and left wings of the Burnley Labour movement consequently hardened and unity for the 1894 municipal elections became an impossibility. Ten Labour candidates went to the polls and all

were defeated, though Robert Pollard, standing as a straightforward Liberal in Stoneyholme ward, was successful. (68)

Thus a broadly based Labour party with a sound ideology was not created through all the ingredients for it existed. Conflict between the social democrats and the radical trade unionists continued to be a feature of Burnley Labour politics over the next decade; its effect was to strengthen the Conservatives in municipal elections.

Development in nearby Nelson followed a different pattern. Since 1890 the Weavers' Association has sustained a small Liberal Labour group in the town council whilst the Trades Council, largely influenced by the Weavers, displayed an equally sturdy spirit and was considering schemes to run a Labour newspaper in the surrounding district. (69) The Labour movement was given added enthusiasm from a growing disillusion with the Liberal party. In 1892 the Weavers complained that the M.P. for Clitheroe, U. J. Kay Shuttleworth, had been neglecting his duties in the Commons, having been absent from several important divisions, and it was doubted whether a landowner could really represent the interests of working men. (70) Criticism reached the form of an attempt by Nelson Weavers, supported by the S.D.F., to run a Labour candidate a Clitheroe at the next General Election; the scheme was scotched by lack of support from neighbouring trade societies. (71) This expression of independence nonetheless irked the local Liberals who made no attempt to co-operate with Labour candidates in the 1892 municipal elections. It was this attitude which led to the

formation in Nelson of an Independent Labour Party, comprising socialists and trade unionists, in December 1892. (72)

The position of the S.D.F. in Nelson had been quite strong; now its vigour was infused into the Labour alliance. The socialists were able to work with the Trades Council in 1893 to send three representatives to the School Board. (73) One of them was Ernest Johnson of whom the radical Nelson Chronicle observed: "Comrade Johnson is where he is because the socialist is well organised and therefore instead of wasting their strength in vain and useless rivalry they kept together, and what is more to the purpose, worked together". (74) At the municipal elections of the following November there was an arrangement between the Trades Council, the T.L.P. and the S.D.F. (which maintained its separate organisation) to support five Labour candidates; they campaigned for fair contracts, an improvement in local facilities for baths and gymnasia, better workers' houses built by the municipality and direct municipal control of hospitals and public houses. (75) Two labour candidates, Ward and Thomas Lord of the Weavers' Association, were elected. (76)

The liaison between the socialists and the trade unions in Nelson continued until 1896, when the Weavers' Association decided to withdraw from municipal politics. By the turn of the century they were back on their old course, forming the basis of a Nelson Labour party in which socialism played an important role. In the mid 'nineties, however, it remained to be seen how far social democrats would be willing to co-operate with non-socialist Labour men.

4. Achievements by 1895.

By 1895 the S.D.F. had well over twenty branches in Lancashire although little new ground had been broken. (77) Joe Terrett had visited the Wigan area in the spring of 1893 lecturing in the mining villages and gaining a few converts, but the prevailing radicalism of the Miners' Federation proved to be a barrier to further progress. (78) There were only two social democratic candidates at the 1895 General Election in Lancashire; Hyndman had been campaigning at Burnley, whilst at South Salford H. W. Hobart, a compositor from London who had worked for the S.D.F. at Rochdale in 1892, was attempting to improve on W. K. Hall's performance. More money would have solved many problems at this stage. The Lancashire District Federation of the S.D.F. had piously pledged itself to perfect socialist organisation, (79) but the movement was well behind other political parties in terms of newspapers and professional registration agents. Dan Irving worked tirelessly at Burnley, arranging outdoor meetings and devising wall posters which proclaimed "Hyndman's programme covers all and more than all the Liberals and Radicals are striving for". The earnestness of his campaign was praised even by the Liberal press. (80) Hyndman himself delivered fifty speeches in the fortnight before the election. (81) At Salford Hobart faced the handicap of a weakened S.D.F. movement whilst Arrandale and Watters of the local Trades Council declared their support for the radical candidate. (82) He worked assiduously among the Irish electors, promising to demand legislative independence for Ireland if returned, but

received only ten per cent. of the votes against the same two opponents that Hall had fought three years previously. (83)

Hyndman acquired twelve per cent of the votes at Burnley, where the radical Philip Stanhope was returned. The Irish votes probably went against the S.D.F. and Hyndman later blamed the other parties for corrupt electioneering. (84) Initially the S.D.F. had hoped to win the seat (85) but following the antagonisms in the local Labour movement Hyndman revised his aims, admitting "we had no expectation of carrying the seat outright". (86)

Dr. Tsusuki had seen 1895 as the climax of the growth of organised socialism in England during the nineteenth century, with another ten years to pass before the socialist parties were to regain the same influence. (87) What had the S.D.F. achieved in Lancashire by 1895? Electorally its record was poor, with no more than a dozen representatives in local councils; its prospect of winning parliamentary seats was very remote. On the other hand the Lancashire social democrats had come to terms with the region's social and economic structure, accepting the fact of trade unionism and attempting to synthesise a policy out of the ballot box and the union card. The movement of the mid 1890's in north east Lancashire was completely different from that of ten years before, when Hunter-Watts, "idealist, yet business like and perhaps most revolutionary of all", (88) was in charge. Whilst the S.D.F. continued often to use revolutionary language its local leaders were men who knew no tradition of social revolution; they aimed towards municipal socialism, striving for concerted Labour action.

Although the movement possessed no brilliant theorists, able to modify and develop Marxism to suit conditions, S.D.F. programmes were always coherent and often far-sighted demands for working class reforms. It was this cautious approach, without the ardent "impossibilism" which later developed within the S.D.F. in Scotland and London, that lends credence to the belief that Lancashire social democracy was "right wing". (89)

At the same time S.D.F. propaganda was keen and enthusiastic. The Federation introduced perennial political campaigning and was first among socialist societies to speak of provisions, such as free meals for needy children and adequate education until the age of 15, which were later to be recognised as essentials in a civilised society. Socialist speakers were not afraid, either, to attack comfortable beliefs and cherished institutions; Dan Irving, for instance, questioned the existence of the Royal Family, which "did not do anything for the enormous sums of money it took from the country". (90) Class consciousness was fostered in the S.D.F. clubs, which were miniatures of a socialist society; here, great emphasis was laid on education and members would be encouraged to plough through their Marx and to study history, politics and economics, the groundwork for any militant socialist. The visit of a notable, William Morris or perhaps George Lansbury, ensured an evening's intellectual satisfaction.

5. Summary

In an important way S.D.F. propaganda made a positive contribution to working class politics; because of their limited nature Labour questions had previously been regarded as a sideshow in national

politics with no relevance to the problems of how the state should be governed. The S.D.F., with its arguments for nationalisation to give the state to the producers, elevated the content of working class politics to make them a subject about power, and not merely about remedial social legislation. But it still remained for the social democrats to have their ideas accepted as the dominant theory for working class action. By 1895 the S.D.F. was a little nearer to this goal: since 1884 it had changed its course in Lancashire and was now exhibiting a more accommodating attitude towards trade unionism. Although the party was still primarily interested in making socialists it was now thinking more consciously of having a foot in the trade union camp and of influencing the unions towards more direct political action - with, of course, the implied aim of creating municipal and parliamentary groups with distinctive socialist programmes. One point of principle had still to be resolved, however; could the S.D.F. sink its conscience and work with avowed non-socialists in a Labour Alliance? As the example of Burnley showed, the attempts of the S.D.F. to force the pace of working class politics aroused tension with the radical trade unionists who themselves were not inclined towards socialist tactics. The atmosphere of conflict was not congenial for persuading the S.D.F. to work with non-socialists and while social democrats made up their mind about future development the I.L.P. was stepping into the political arena with its ideas for creating

an independent labour movement at local and parliamentary levels. Without doubt the I.L.P.'s approach represented a serious rivalry to the S.D.F. but providing it could maintain its regional independence within the Federation - that necessary self determination which had allowed social democrats in Lancashire to adapt to conditions - the S.D.F. could still influence the growth of independent working class politics in the region.

A P P E N D I X

An S.D.F. Municipal Charter, 1893

1. Proper treatment of Labour

- (a) The Council should do as much as possible of its own work itself, and in any case not less than the trade union rate of wages should be paid to its workmen.
- (b) An Eight Hour Day.
- (c) Full Liberty of Combination.
- (d) Prohibition of Overtime except in cases of emergency.
- (e) Reconsideration of duties and salaries of Higher Officials and a prevention of the sweating of unskilled corporation labourers.

2. Housing of the Poor, etc.

- (a) To prevent jerry building the erection by the Corporation of healthy artisans' dwellings to be let at the cost of constructing and maintenance.
- (b) Abolition of all insanitary dwellings.
- (c) Abolition of the smoke nuisance.
- (d) Proper ventilation in factories to be enforced, compulsory maintenance of property in good, clean condition.
- (e) Necessity of enforcement of Food and Drugs Act.

3. Local Taxation and Local Institutions.

- (a) Taxation of ground rent and ground values, part of which taxation be used to defray expenses of Free Libraries, Baths etc.
- (b) Abolition of Local House of Lords (Aldermanic Bench).
- (c) Council meetings to be held in the evening to facilitate Labour Representation.

4. Municipalisation of Monopolies.

- (a) Drink Traffic.
- (b) Tramways.
- (c) Public Wash Houses.
- (d) Municipal sale of coal.

5. Miscellaneous

- (a) Labour Bureau for the registration of Unemployed.
- (b) Municipal Relief Works during depression and distress.

(Burnley Socialist, 14.10.1893)

B THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

The purpose of the Independent Labour Party was to create a workers' party in Parliament which would be independent of the Conservative and Liberal parties and which would have a socialist programme. To this end it was vital for the I.L.P. to co-operate with non-socialist working class organisations and for this reason the party always avoided the doctrinaire socialist approach that was sometimes seen in the S.D.F. and also eschewed the inclusion of the word "socialist" in its title. During the early 1890's, with the increased interest in social reform and labour representation, it seemed that the I.L.P. was well placed to take the lead in working class politics since it had developed as an expression of the political interests of those workers who had turned away from the Liberal party but had not been influenced by the S.D.F. In this atmosphere the capacity of the party to expand was highly estimated : "it will spread out its roots over the country", predicted Blatchford in 1892.⁽⁹¹⁾ First impressions seemed to vindicate this optimism for I.L.P. branches in Lancashire quickly proliferated and the party soon reached parity on this basis with the S.D.F.⁽⁹²⁾ But the number of branches did not necessarily represent solid political gains : the I.L.P. needed to bring about an alliance of working class groups, which meant initially extending its influence from the Manchester region and meeting the challenge of the S.D.F. Moreover, the big cotton unions would have to be infiltrated in order to secure a substantial base for an

independent working class party. The I.L.P. would also have to overcome inadequacies of leadership and organisation. These, then, were the problems that the Lancashire I.L.P. faced between its foundation at Manchester in 1892 and the General Election of 1895.

1. A Manchester Party

At the outset the party was nothing more than a pressure group in Manchester politics. It was a humble organisation, despite the national appeal of Blatchford's journal the Clarion, meeting "in a poorly lit, evil smelling room over a stable, in a side street off Oxford Road".⁽⁹³⁾ Its trade union members represented only the Manchester new unions which had no influence in the radical controlled Trades Council of Manchester and Salford. The party was dominated at first by a group of intellectuals - Blatchford, John Trevor and Fred Brocklehurst - whose value lay in propaganda rather than in the drafting of labour alliances.

Robert Blatchford became the party's first president and the I.L.P. quickly became known as "Blatchford's party".⁽⁹⁴⁾ The man himself, however, was too unreliable to lead a political organisation; he was always more interested in journalism than every day political wranglings and his gay, opinionated writings frequently brought him into conflict with other Labour leaders. He was never on good terms with Keir Hardie; the two differed essentially in character, their relative temperaments characterised in the styles of the Clarion and Hardie's weighty but dull Labour Leader. With G.B. Shaw of the Fabian Society, a person of similar megalomania,

Blatchford's exchanges were strained and often insulting; for instance, he replied to a Shavian slur on his socialism by commenting: "(I) consider the Fabian policy a policy only fit for a lot of big lasses".⁽⁹⁵⁾ Blatchford undoubtedly considered himself, not always with reason, to be at once the inspiration and saviour of Northern socialism and his influence sometimes proved to be a divisive one in the movement.

Nevertheless, despite Manchester's disadvantages, none of the early Lancashire I.L.P. branches were able to emulate the vitality of the region's parent body. It was the Manchester I.L.P. which initiated a scheme to federate the branches throughout the county under the direction of Ben Bilcliffe, the Manchester secretary.⁽⁹⁶⁾ Yet even at Manchester political gains were negligible during the first three years of the party's existence. Its progress was improved in the summer of 1893 when Blatchford resigned as president through his own aversion to the principle of leadership and because he wanted to devote more time to the Clarion. Leonard Hall replaced him, with James Heaviside as vice-president, and immediately the trade union influence in the party was increased.⁽⁹⁷⁾ Work with a pronounced emphasis on labour and trade union questions could therefore begin with active encouragement and direction from above.

By the mid 1890's the I.L.P. was able to move towards a closer understanding with the Trades Council and consequently with the older established trade unions. Since its brush with

the Progressive Party at the 1891 school Board elections the Manchester and Salford Trades Council had shown more convincing signs of political independence than in the 'eighties'. In 1892 it had issued an advanced parliamentary programme which demanded a legal Eight Hours Day, the nationalisation of land and railways and a strong measure of electoral reform to give more political power to the working man.⁽⁹⁸⁾ But in spite of the local boom in trade union membership which helped the Trades Council to attain the second largest membership in England, there had been no commensurate increase in labour representation at local level; nor did the Liberal party offer any chance of improving this position.

For a variety of reasons I.L.P. policy helped greatly during the following few years to bring about a change in the attitude of both the Trades Council and the local Liberals. Firstly, the I.L.P. presented an example of stern independence in 1893 by supporting 12 candidates on a distinct platform in the Manchester and Salford municipal elections; though none of the candidates were elected it was an inspiring gesture which did not pass unnoticed.⁽⁹⁹⁾ Secondly, the I.L.P. began to champion the cause of the unemployed. As the trade boom of the early 1890's gave way to depression about 1892, the I.L.P. revived the old S.D.F. tactic, familiar in Salford during the mid 'eighties, of organising demonstrations for unemployed workmen; moreover some attempt was made to afford relief by setting up food kitchens to

provide a frugal meal for the needy.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ A third factor in both the strength of the I.L.P. itself and in its ability to influence trade unionists was the conversion to active Labour politics of a tightly knit group of miners in the pit districts of east Manchester. During the industrial troubles of 1893 in the coal trade R.M. Pankhurst, a well-known Manchester radical who had joined the I.L.P., visited the collieries of Bradford and Clayton expounding the principles of public ownership in the mines.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ In September of the same year Joseph Burgess, with the help of three local I.L.P. men, Bilcliffe, Heaviside and John Harker had started the Colliery Workman's Times as a weekly journal to advocate "the nationalisation of the Mines by and through the independent representation of Labour in Parliament".⁽¹⁰²⁾ This work won the I.L.P. two important converts in Jesse Butler, the miners' agent at Openshaw, and J.E. Sutton, the secretary of the miners' union at Bradford.⁽¹⁰³⁾

The fourth and most important contribution by the I.L.P. to Labour politics in Manchester was a comprehensive canon of social reform, the Municipal Programme, published in 1893. It followed but expanded similar S.D.F. programmes demanding improved living conditions for working people by the demolition of slums and the building of municipal housing schemes, free baths and washing places, all to be supervised by the creation of works committees. The programme placed the responsibility for these reforms on the local municipal authorities, many of whose duties, it was alleged, were executed by contractors and middlemen who made profits out of

inferior work completed with cheap labour. To allow the municipality more scope for administering this work itself the I.L.P. urged the creation of a new administrative network which would facilitate the direct employment of municipal workers at fair wages, in addition to placing all public works under democratic control. It was hoped also that unemployment would be relieved by the greater demand for labour. The ultimate aim was to bring about a more pleasant and healthy social environment as well as a community administered according to socialist principles. (104)

As a result of these combined factors the I.L.P. and Trades Council began to share a common outlook on many labour questions. In 1894 there were three socialists on the executive committee of the Trades Council, whose title had now been changed to the "Manchester and Salford Trades and Labour Council". (105) It began to share in the work on unemployment relief (106) and also co-operated in the electoral policy; at the municipal elections of 1894 7 I.L.P. candidates were given support by the Trades Council in Manchester and Salford wards, the miners Sutton and Butler securing election whilst ironically the Trades Council president, Richard Watters, was defeated as a Liberal candidate in Salford. (107) At the same time a United Labour Party, sustained mainly by the I.L.P., contested the local School Board elections, taking votes from the Progressives. (108)

This growing tendency for working class groups to act in concert posed a serious threat to the position of the local

Liberal party. The weakness of working class radicalism in Manchester⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ had meant that the Liberals were as poorly represented in the City Council as in the parliamentary divisions. Since 1885, moreover, the Manchester Liberal Union had made little headway in augmenting its working class support; Liberal organisation in the city was based upon local committees in each of the constituencies, a system which worked tolerably well in the wealthier divisions such as Manchester South, a Middle class area where the party could count on sound financial support. But ward organisation, registration work and canvassing were totally inadequate in the working class districts.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ At Manchester East, for example, organisation practically stood still in the late 1880's because the local Liberals, mostly working class people, were so few and so short of money that their accounts showed continued deficits of over £150, which caused them frequently to borrow from the meagre resources of the Liberal Union.⁽¹¹¹⁾ Clearly the high degree of local autonomy produced an uneven distribution of wealth and strength but the middle class districts treasured their independence and resisted change. They also dictated policies and were able to call the tune on Home Rule⁽¹¹²⁾; before the mid 1890's Manchester liberalism took no account of social reform and consequently working class voters became increasingly attracted to the I.L.P. and the idea of labour representation. The radically inspired Labour Electoral Association, which the Trades Council had supported, produced no

effective results and with the advent of the I.L.P. it clearly began to break up. (113)

These were alarming signs for the future of liberalism; nonetheless the Liberal Union probably overestimated the early influence of the I.L.P. in working class politics. The Liberals were alarmed by the 12 I.L.P. candidates of 1893 and the image of the new party's power was fortified by Blatchford's fierce language in the Clarion, where he promised the Liberal party "a crushing defeat". (114) It was rumoured among local Liberal committees in 1893 that the I.L.P. intended to promote six parliamentary candidates at the next General Election, (115) though such a campaign was certainly beyond the capabilities of the socialists.

In November 1893 the Liberal Union decided to open negotiations with labour groups in the city, with the aim of avoiding direct clashes between Liberal and Labour candidates in local elections. (116) But when T.G. Ashton, a former Liberal M.P. for Hyde, suggested that local Liberal Committees

"carefully consider the advisability of recommending certain wards in their division to adopt representatives of labour, as candidates in the next municipal vacancies"

his advice was rejected; some members felt that it would be a mistake to go "cap in hand" to the I.L.P. (117) It remained to find some gesture of sympathy which a middle class party might show to politically active working men. In short, the Liberals decided to steal the socialists' clothes by adopting "so much of

the Labour Party's programme as is possible" and presenting a new radical policy.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ C.P. Scott, the editor of the Manchester Guardian, was wholly in favour of this tactic; it had the encouraging precedent of the radical victory achieved in 1889 by the Progressive Party in the first London County Council elections,⁽¹¹⁹⁾ and eventually Scott persuaded the Manchester Liberals to adopt a programme based on the London prototype.⁽¹²⁰⁾ The "Progressive Municipal Programme", as it became known, included many points from the I.L.P. charter of the previous year, though was less specific on the Eight Hours question.⁽¹²¹⁾

The programme failed to rally working class votes for two principal reasons. In the first place the situation in London in 1889 differed considerably from that of Manchester in 1894. The London Progressives experienced no opposition from groups such as the I.L.P. wishing to establish a political party based on the working class.⁽¹²²⁾ Consequently, revitalised policy proved sufficient to win them significant political gains. For the Manchester Liberals, on the other hand, it was clearly insufficient merely to offer a duplication of socialist policy; such an action did nothing to remove the existence of potentially independent labour groups. The other important factor was labour representation; even the L.C.C. had its "labour bench" but the Manchester Liberal Union, in spite of renewed efforts, was unable to carry through a plan to incorporate labour representatives into its list of candidates. Although discussions were held with Trades Council

leaders to arrive at an agreement many Liberals remained hostile to the idea of working class influence within the party, an attitude supported by the National Liberal Federation which claimed to see difficulties, "both financial and of other kinds"⁽¹²³⁾ in this scheme.

The City Council therefore remained beyond the control of Manchester Liberalism throughout the 1890's and in consequence its policies had little chance of being implemented. Liberalism offered no greater possibilities for working class reform than did socialism and an independent labour party, and whilst the Liberal Union lost its hold on the working class vote the idea of a socialist led Labour party in Manchester politics began to seem a distinct possibility in the near future.

2. Relations with the S.D.F.

In other Lancashire towns the I.L.P.'s passage was not so smooth as in Manchester, with a friendly Trades Council and no serious S.D.F. opposition. Some areas presented considerable barriers to progress by the nature of the local political climate. Liverpool, with its vital working class Toryism, provided such an example. Although the Liverpool I.L.P. had new unionist influence in the Trades Council⁽¹²⁴⁾ and an active local Fabian Society to support it the ground proved hostile to socialism, a fact which had been emphasised by the collapse of the Liverpool S.D.F. in 1887.⁽¹²⁵⁾ An I.L.P. branch was established in 1893 and quickly took the lead in uniting trade unionists behind it in a Labour Representation Committee. Liaison between the trade

union and socialist wings was provided by a group of socialist new unionists led by Sexton of the Dockers. At the 1895 City Council elections the L.R.C. sponsored 13 candidates, almost half of them in Everton - the I.L.P. stronghold.⁽¹²⁶⁾ None was elected and soon afterwards the L.R.C. was disbanded as disagreements broke out between the socialists and the more moderate trade unionists.⁽¹²⁷⁾ Nonetheless the lesson of labour unity had been learnt for in following years the Trades Council continued to display a more independent line than it had during its Liberal days of the late 1880's.⁽¹²⁸⁾

In a hostile atmosphere, similar to that of Liverpool, the I.L.P. had accepted the need to speak amicably to non-socialist trade unionists for the purpose of uniting all sections of the labour movement in the interests of creating an independent workers' party. This, however, proved to be a point of conflict with the S.D.F., which in turn had important consequences on the I.L.P.'s development. At the beginning of the 1890's the S.D.F. was the pre-eminent socialist party in the region. It possessed a manifestly more intellectual Marxist philosophy and in consequence displayed a wider appreciation of socialism than did the I.L.P., which in comparison seemed rather unprincipled. In 1893 Burgess of the Workman's Times claimed with some justification that "the I.L.P. has many things to learn from the S.D.F."⁽¹²⁹⁾ In some instances the I.L.P. was willing to accept social democratic leadership in working class politics; such an example can be found at Rochdale, where an early policy of socialist unity was adopted⁽¹³⁰⁾

and it is this type of liaison which lends support to Dr. Tsuzuki's assertion that the two parties were "complementary rather than directly competitive in their appeal".⁽¹³¹⁾

Unfortunately this conduct was not universally accepted. In the first place, social democrats felt that if the I.L.P. could only imitate, then it had no justification for a separate existence. Hyndman refused to entertain the idea of a party based on the working class⁽¹³²⁾ whilst Quelch, editor of Justice, argued that "an independent labour party must be a social democratic party".⁽¹³³⁾ The S.D.F.'s unwillingness to compromise its socialist position for the ideologically less profound position of the I.L.P. would easily have prevailed but for a second, important source of dispute: the undeniable ability of the I.L.P.'s formula to win support in areas where the S.D.F. was established. The experiences of the Salford and Nelson social democrats proved this; in both cases social democracy had been diluted by the advent of the I.L.P. which had then proceeded to take charge of the socialist movement in those areas. The I.L.P. was therefore looked upon as a dangerous rival to the S.D.F., whose attitude changed from Darwin's "benevolent neutrality" of 1892⁽¹³⁴⁾ to the embittered behaviour in 1894 of the Nelson and Wigan branches which wanted to prohibit S.D.F. speakers' supporting I.L.P. platforms in towns where the two groups had rival branches.⁽¹³⁵⁾ This trend explains the plea by Joe Terrett (A.G. Wolfe) in 1893 for the I.L.P. to include the acknowledgement "social democratic" in its title.⁽¹³⁶⁾

It must be emphasised that Nelson and Salford were the only areas in Lancashire where the I.L.P. superseded the S.D.F. in the

early 1890's. The problem of rivalry was intensified, however, by Robert Blatchford's advocacy of socialist unity. There was something of value in Blatchford's idea since in many areas the two socialist parties were equally weak and would undoubtedly have benefited from co-operation. In 1894 Blatchford spoke of the "real body and soul of socialism" in the North which was expressed by neither of the factious parties.⁽¹³⁷⁾ He thought a divided movement "doomed to be beaten in detail,"⁽¹³⁸⁾ a warning not altogether unfounded. Blatchford's editorials in the Clarion were increasingly turned towards the need for socialist unity in 1894 but his ideas collided with the stumbling block of doctrinaire sectionalism, even though Blatchford was prepared to base his National Socialist party on the principles of social democracy.⁽¹³⁹⁾ His promptings had some influence within the I.L.P. but the overtures made by the National Administrative Council received no encouragement from the S.D.F.,⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ whose prevailing attitude was against the creation of a "cross breed, a mongrel".⁽¹⁴¹⁾

The problems of the relationship between the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. were never satisfactorily solved and it was left for local branches to sort out working arrangements; but the real barrier was that the ideals of the two parties did not coincide and each was unwilling to sacrifice its plans for the benefit of the other, an attitude which is understandable but which rendered the socialist synthesis the more difficult of realisation.

3. The I.L.P. and The Cotton Unions

Any party which, like the I.L.P., sought to establish an

independent, institutionalised basis for labour politics in Lancashire was forced at some stage in its development to attempt infiltration of the cotton trade unions. Because the cotton unions were amalgamated it was necessary to secure influence in local branches, as the S.D.F. had done at Burnley. Initially the I.L.P. had no following in the cotton towns since the cotton unions had not been affected by the trade union boom of 1889-90 and the I.L.P. was essentially a party for the new unions. The I.L.P.'s principal foothold for working its way into the cotton unions was, at Oldham, among the gas workers and labourers in the Trades Council, of which J.R. Clynes was elected President in November 1892. This influence did not extend initially to the cotton unions, which, with those of the engineering trade, effectively controlled the executive committee of the Council. (142) Clynes had attempted, during the industrial disputes of 1892-93, to extend socialist thinking among the cotton unionists, stumping neighbouring towns during the "twenty grim weeks of hunger, tears and bitter cold" (143), organising subscriptions on behalf of the card room workers, advocating an Eight Hour Day (144) and urging the cotton workers to become politically active in their own cause:

"That we do not take political action as unionists is not true at all. The evil is that we are half-hearted and inconsistent; and at one and the same time we complain to Parliament and continue to send to Parliament the men who make our complaints possible and necessary." (145)

Clynes' work produced a mixed reception in Oldham. Though he gained in stature among the new unionists, his political opponents, notably Thomas Ashton of the local Spinners' Union,

became more intransigent. A movement was set afoot to reduce the influence of Clynes in the Trades Council and in 1893 he was opposed in the presidential election by Schofield, the Engineers' secretary, a supporter of "no politics" in trade unionism; Clynes was defeated by one vote but was unanimously elected to the position of vice-president. (146) He was still in a position to influence events but it was another year before any substantial progress was made by the I.L.P. at Oldham.

Fortunately, events were beginning to take a turn for the better in another town. The I.L.P. managed to revitalise the political labour movement at Nelson, which, since its breakthrough of 1890, had slumped; at the municipal elections of 1891 the S.D.F. had supported one candidate against the two established parties and it seemed that the principle of independence might subside through lack of effort and guidance, as it had done at Bolton from 1887-9. The revival came in December 1892 after a municipal bye-election had produced the defeat of a Trades Council nominee by an official Liberal candidate. It was decided to fight official liberalism with a coalition of socialists and trade unionists and in the same month a party was formed, called the Independent Labour Party, comprising social democrats, radicals and more moderate trade unionists. (147) The group contested the 1893 municipal elections with 5 candidates: all those with socialist backgrounds were defeated but two trade unionists, one of them the radical William Ward of the Weavers, were successful. (148) Furthermore in the following School Board contest the socialists lent support to the

Trades Council candidates in another joint effort, with the result that three labour councillors were installed. (149)

In comparative terms this was a striking achievement although, as was seen, it did not improve general relations between the S.D.F. and the I.L.P. On the other hand no Lancashire borough elections produced better results for the socialists. (150) At Preston, where Keir Hardie had been delivering speeches, the Weavers' Secretary Luke Park polled well (151) but elsewhere I.L.P. candidatures were very discouraging. Moreover, with trade beginning to improve early in 1894 the possibility of extending socialist influence in the cotton towns through the Eight Hours issue appeared to have faded.

Far from reverting to their old industrial stance, however, the cotton unionists began to show increased interest in political questions during 1894. The reasons were partly internal ones; the Weavers' Amalgamation was still engaged in seeking an amendment through Parliament to the Cotton Cloth Factories Act, whilst the spinning trade was working through the Textile Factory Workers' Association for a reform of the limited liability laws. The Card-room Amalgamation was also beginning to stir after the lock out of 1892-93, which had drastically halted the union's growth, to press for a particular clause for card room operatives. (152) All sections of the cotton industry were dismayed by the House of Lords' rejection of the Employer's Liability Bill in 1893, an event which prompted William Mullin of the Card-room Amalgamation to warn of "united action at the polling booth," by the cotton workers. (153) The Eight Hours question was still a part of the

U.T.F.W.A. policy although its form had by now taken that of a permissive bill which would allow trade option.

The cotton unions' need for legislation against the indifference of Parliament was admitted by the Cotton Factory Times as early as 1892, (154) but at the Textile Workers' conference of 1893 labour representation was not discussed. Bye-elections at Stockport, Burnley and Accrington during 1893 revealed little interest on the part of cotton worker voters in these issues, a point which did not escape the attention of James Mawdsley, who took the opportunity to remark

"If the operatives of Lancashire....do not, at the next general election, send a fair proportion of men pledged to their programme, it will be a fair assumption to make that they themselves care precious little for it." (155)

The Cotton Factory Times endorsed this view:

"If the workers are to secure ^{the} legislation they are asking for they will sooner or later have to make the adoption of their programme the point on which elections must turn." (156)

How far was the I.L.P. able to provide a directing influence?

At Burnley and Nelson the inspiration of the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. caused the local unions to stand firm on the Eight Hours issue; the interest shown in union affairs at Nelson had been greatly increased by the recent co-operation of Labour and Socialist forces (157) and in 1894 the Weavers' Associations of Burnley, Colne and Nelson strongly condemned the suggestion that the U.T.F.W.A. should compromise on Eight Hours. (158) It was largely through the insistence of the local unions at Burnley and Nelson that the Northern Weavers' Amalgamation decided in March

1894 to bring the question of Labour representation also before the U.T.F.W.A. (159)

The matter was discussed at the Textile Workers' conference of August 1894; the general tone was favourable but since interest in Eight Hours had been slackening (160), it was decided to hold a ballot on both questions. (161) Against the limited influence of the Socialists was ranged the confused mind of the Union leadership. The encouraging results of an experiment at Mather and Platt's Salford Ironworks with a 48 hour week (162) may have convinced some officials that a shorter working day was worth attempting, and James Mawdsley had signed the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in 1894, specifically noting the cotton unions' desire to secure a curtailment of working hours. (163) Hyndman, before a meeting of the International Congress of Textile workers at Manchester in July, had told foreign socialists that Mawdsley was "rapidly becoming a Socialist" (164) himself; David Holmes, on the other hand, remained sceptical of socialism and wary of associating with its politics. (165) On the labour representation issue Mawdsley showed signs of favour towards independence (166) but at the same time was firmly ensconced as a member of the Ashton under Lyne Conservative Association. (167)

The ballot was held at the end of October 1894; trade was not good but it had been worse in recent years. Each section of the industry polled separately on the two issues so that individual branches of the Card room, Spinners, Weavers' and Overlookers' Amalgamations all made returns. In the spinning trade Eight Hours

received a more favourable response generally than labour representation, although the reverse was true in the weaving manufacturing districts. Since many smaller areas probably followed the lead of the larger, more active centres it was on the latter's decisions that the outcome turned. The lack of unanimity in Bolton and Oldham decided Labour representation policy: both had majorities against the idea. The spinning trade was probably keener on Eight Hours because the memories of the lock out were still fresh; but a particular clause for spinning, eventually worked into the Factory Act of 1895, was the trade's only immediate legislative aim and full scale labour representation seemed a big price to pay for it. Conversely, the Eight Hours Day was rejected by the big weaving centres where the prospect of increased earnings was threatened by a shorter working day when operatives were paid by the piece. (168) Labour representation received its main support from the local societies favourable also to Eight Hours: Burnley, Padiham, Nelson and Colne (169) where the socialists were strongest.

The ballot was a good indication of socialist influence among the cotton unionists but the main point to emerge was that this influence was clearly too limited for the socialists to be able to take the lead in establishing an independent labour movement based on the unions. When the Textile Factory Workers decided to implement the verdict of the ballot it became evident that labour representation would follow the traditional party lines. (170) Holmes and Mawdsley were chosen as cotton union candidates

representing each political party but the result of the ballot in the spinning towns showed that the spinners themselves were apathetic; Mawdsley and the Spinners' Amalgamation refused to co-operate in the scheme and so it was dropped. (171)

Apart from the cost of labour representation, the scheme proved unacceptable to the Spinners for other reasons. In the first place Mawdsley and Holmes had been prominent in the veiled attempt made by old trade unionists to exclude socialists from the Trades Union Congress. Mawdsley and the Textile Factory Workers had given strong support to new standing orders for the Trades Union Congress in 1895 which had been forced through the Parliamentary Committee by the casting vote of its chairman, David Holmes. (172) These actions provided local cotton unions with an example of stern resistance to the socialists. Friction was well illustrated in the Oldham Trades Council, which for almost two years had been moving towards a clash between its socialist and moderate elements. In November 1894 Thomas Ashton of the Spinners' resigned as secretary of the Trades Council and Clynes was elected in his place. The socialists had been pressing for labour representation at a local level but the Spinners, following the example of their Amalgamation, objected to the idea because of party divisions among their members and the heavy burden on union finances. (173) As secretary Clynes continued to press the scheme, arguing that labour representation would strengthen the influence of the Trades Council in the municipality. (174) In June 1895 the Oldham Spinners withdrew from the Trades Council, (175)

an action which drastically reduced the Council's membership; (176) Its more serious consequence was a breach between the small, socialist unions, led by the Gas-workers, and the large group of politically uncommitted workers, numbering some 11,000 members and including the card room operatives. (177) Clynes' opportunity to manoeuvre the labour movement in Oldham under a socialist leadership was therefore lost.

By 1895 therefore, the I.L.P. had failed sufficiently to establish itself in the cotton towns as the guardian of the workers' best interests to hope for support from this source in the General Election. The progress of socialism in the mining districts was even less noticeable; with the exception of S.D.F. influence at Burnley and I.L.P. footholds in east Manchester, the main centres of coal mining preserved a balance between the Tory and Liberal colliers by pursuing an independent brand of working class radicalism. There were very few active socialist clubs in any of the pit villages; moreover, none of the miners' leaders, except Jesse Butler, had any formal connection with the two socialist parties; Aspinwall was said to be sympathetic towards the I.L.P. (178) but he never joined it, whilst Sam Woods refused to believe that socialism offered more to the worker than straightforward trade unionism. (179) Consequently the I.L.P. played no part in working class politics among the miners at this stage.

4. Internal Problems

Policy differences and personal rivalries have been shown to have been a serious threat to the early development of the I.L.P.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ The party had no dominating central influence such as London exercised in the S.D.F: the geographical distribution of the I.L.P. in the 1890's was concentrated almost entirely in Lancashire, the West Riding and Scotland and each of these elements attempted to assert its views on how the I.L.P. should develop.

The most important issue in debate between Lancashire and the other regions in these years was the Fourth Clause. Blatchford heartily approved of it, and though occasional complaints were made that it inhibited membership,⁽¹⁸¹⁾ Lancashire branches clung to its principles. The Fourth Clause in the constitution of the Manchester and Salford I.L.P. simply required a pledge of members that in an election they would not vote for a candidate of the Liberal, Liberal Unionist or Conservative parties. The object of this clause was to prove to the workers of Lancashire that the new party was not a political trap, but that it was genuinely independent of both the Liberals and the Tories.⁽¹⁸²⁾ The Manchester people were not convinced that the I.L.P. in other regions had successfully established its independence from radicalism, and their fears received support from the events in the Halifax bye-election of 1893 when John Lister, the I.L.P. nominee, took care to emphasise that he was a labour, not a socialist candidate.⁽¹⁸³⁾ At the Bradford conference of the I.L.P. in 1893 William Johnson of Manchester tried to persuade the delegates to adopt the Fourth Clause as national party policy but the move was rejected, largely

at the insistence of Bradford I.L.P. (184) This reversal was not an end to the matter, however, for at the following year's conference the Fourth Clause principle received a bigger share of the votes and was defeated by a compromising motion which allowed local parties to decide their own policy in this matter at bye-elections. (185)

In broad terms the clause was important because it questioned the very nature of the I.L.P. Its main opponent was Keir Hardie who wanted the I.L.P. vote to be free, to be used in mass if necessary against one of the political parties; a disfranchised socialist, he thought, would be unable to adopt such tactics. (186) Hardie represented the general I.L.P. desire to eliminate the Liberal party; he saw it as the main enemy of the I.L.P. and thought that any radical group of the left must crush the Liberal movement before it could secure working class votes. Hardie's was a perfectly reasonable assumption for a man of his background; he had himself experienced the shackling effect of the Liberals on working class politics during the Mid-Lanark bye-election of 1888; (187) as a Scottish miner he had grown up on an atmosphere of working class radicalism but knew practically nothing about working class conservatism. Hardie's reasoning had therefore little relevance to Lancashire and his assertion, made at Bolton in 1895, that "the choice (for the worker) lies 'twixt the I.L.P. and the Tory" made no sense. (188)

Blatchford, on the other hand, was thoroughly acquainted with Lancashire conditions; he had no quarrel with the idea of recruiting

supporters from the Liberal party but saw no point in perpetuating Toryism:

"I do not see any 'moral' effect to be gained by selling our vote to the highest bidder, or by making anyally of an enemy".(189)

He added the crucial point that:

"Both parties are our enemies and our object is to defeat both".(190)

To counteract the division in working class politics Blatchford therefore saw the need for the Fourth Clause in Lancashire to build an independent socialist movement. His call for a united socialist party⁽¹⁹¹⁾ was a logical step from this belief.

Mingled with Blatchford's hostility to Hardie over the Fourth clause was his personal dislike of the Scot who was beginning to assume the role of leader of the I.L.P. Blatchford had always possessed a strong aversion to the concept of leadership; for this reason he had resigned the presidency of the Manchester party and though briefly in 1892 he had considered John Burns as "the head of front of the Great Labour Movement in England"⁽¹⁹²⁾ he was soon telling his readers, "I don't see any Parnell in the Labour movement we want no leaders and should be ill-advised to tolerate any".⁽¹⁹³⁾ It came as a great personal blow, therefore, when Blatchford saw Hardie elected the President of the I.L.P. at the 1894 conference.

Blatchford could always submerge his disappointments, however, by concentrating more deeply on improving the Clarion, and the journal began to take up more of his time in the mid-nineties;

but whilst he moved to Fleet Street he left confusion behind in Manchester. His influence on other I.L.P. personalities had been unsettling for the party. The fourth clause had been defeated but the Lancashire I.L.P. men still had to seek some kind of co-operation with the party in general, especially since in 1894 Leonard Hall and Fred Brocklehurst, both important officials at Manchester (194), had been elected to the National Administrative Council. They faced the dilemma of standing by the policy of the National I.L.P. or of remaining loyal to Blatchford; moreover, both were I.L.P. parliamentary candidates.

Hall had subscribed to Blatchford's views on Socialist unity (195) but the two men gradually drifted apart in 1894 as Blatchford continued to make critical attacks on "Leadership", much to Hall's discomfort; in November Hall resigned as president of the Manchester party, having feared that he was regarded as a figurehead. (196) There followed a journalistic duel in the Clarion (197) between the two which did nothing to improve relations in the party nor to build up socialist morale for the anticipated General Election. The sordid affair was completed by Hall's renunciation of the Fourth Clause and his withdrawal as I.L.P. candidate at North East Manchester on the eve of the poll, ostensibly through shortage of campaign funds. (198)

At about this time Blatchford revealed his utter despondency to A.M. Thompson ("Dangle" of the Clarion):

"I feel very sick of the British Workman and his leaders; and also of the dirty lies, tricks and intrigues of the lousy political crew.....I rather like a good honest fight with a good honest man. But this is a dirty mob of political blackguards we are fighting with. They make me sick. I ask myself is it worth it? Will anything come of

it? Read the speech of (J.H.) Wilson's (199). It is such insolent dishonesty. It is such unscrupulous falsehood. Then think of Leonard Hall's case; of the shameful mess in the Manchester I.L.P.; of the envy and stupidity of (Joseph) Burgess; of the slipperiness of Hardie; of the blather and humbug of Hyndman; of the wriggling and twisting of (T.R.) Threlfall; of the blind ignorance and miserable toadyism of Pickard & Co., of the bumptious arrogance and endless selfishness of (John) Burns; of the mean^{ness}, the folly, the weakness, cowardice and ignorance of the great mass of the workers; of the vanity, spite and envy of the little S.D. efferers!" (200)

Rivalry and bad feeling among the I.L.P. leadership created confusion among the rank and file, preventing full attention being paid to the parliamentary campaigns of 1895. Financial problems also bedevilled election work since few branches had succeeded in attaining a high enough membership and sound organisation during the previous few years. Of the areas selected for parliamentary campaigns Bolton had the most vigorous branch; it ran a monthly labour journal and supported a lively Labour Church. (201) Rochdale I.L.P. members were also active and had a fine parliamentary candidate in G. N. Barnes of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. At the other extreme James Sexton was selected as I.L.P. candidate for Ashton under Lyne before even a club had been set up on the town. (202) Much depended on the drive of candidates and the ability to recruit voluntary workers and financial aid.

There were 8 I.L.P. candidates at the General Election in Lancashire; only where the Liberal party failed to find a candidate did the I.L.P. secure a respectable poll, and at Gorton, where Dr. Pankhurst stood for the I.L.P., a straightforward deal was negotiated with the Liberals to avoid splitting the radical vote. (203) All the candidates presented socialist programmes of varying detail

and all attempted to convince the electorate of their independence; but these manoeuvres brought no meaningful results for it was clear that the I.L.P. lacked the ability to challenge either Liberals or Conservatives. Half of the campaigns produced humiliating results. (204) The Liberal party also polled badly in the region but seemed in no danger of being replaced by the I.L.P. as the party on the left; though the Labour Leader noted the Liberal defeat and spoke of the I.L.P.'s "converts by the thousand" (205) the Clarion, which had given little space to the campaigns in its columns, expressed by its silence what must have been the prevailing mood of the party.

5. Social Bases of the I.L.P.

In spite of these failures the I.L.P. remained an active force in Lancashire working class politics, even increasing the number of its branches in the later 1890's. The party proved sufficiently resilient to survive its political defeats because of the intellectual and social bases of the movement.

Firstly, the Clarion had achieved a resounding success in preaching socialism: "the policy the THE CLARION is a policy of humanity" declared Blatchford in the first issue, (206) and the journal stimulated a remarkable interest in what might be called "socialism of the heart". Blatchford succeeded more than any contemporary socialist in creating an intellectual basis for a popular party and though he has been accused of adding nothing to Socialist thought (207) he was able to exploit a mass readership in the Clarion, by presenting political discussion alongside literary and sporting news, in a way which the purely propagandist weeklies were

never able to do.

Blatchford also succeeded in presenting the socialism of the I.L.P. in a readable form. He synthesised his views in Merrie England, a penny edition of some Clarion articles, which he published in 1894. In the book he examined industrial society, pointing out the injustices of wealth which arose from *laissez faire* economics, and said that by means of socialism society should be changed in order to create economic equality. Blatchford confessed that he knew little about the technical details required to establish a "socialist state", but saw his mission as that of a socialist "recruiting sergeant". (208) The book was completely different in character from the Marxist[†] scientific socialism which social democrats were encouraged to master. It had^a lively style and was written as an informal address to a typical English worker, John Smith of Oldham, with the author himself playing Devil's Advocate to his own arguments and then attempting to defend himself. Blatchford intended the reader to arrive at socialism through a sense of moral indignation, and in fact his book proved exceptionally popular as a polemical tract, selling three quarters of a million copies during its first year. (209)

Unlike Marxian socialism that of the I.L.P. required no deep intellectual effort to comprehend; it was simply a means of showing the majority of those who suffered under capitalism how to improve their position. The I.L.P. concentrated on stimulating interest in socialism: once interest had been aroused it was kept active by participation in the socialist community, provided by local branch activities in the I.L.P. clubs where socialist men and women sought

comradeship and an escape from the drudgery of factory life.

Through the inspiration of the Clarion, cycling clubs were established to provide an opportunity for week-ends out in the countryside.

In 1896 Clarion Vans appeared, bringing itinerant lecturers to hold impromptu political meetings in town centres. (210) There were also Clarion clubs for singing, rambling and scouting. The Clarion clubs became "firmly and unequivocally socialist and, though affiliated to the Labour party and supporting its candidates at elections the Clarion members regarded themselves as the elite of (the Labour) movement, at once more go ahead and less corrupted by office" (211) These activities were especially popular in the industrial towns, where socialism offered not merely a philosophy for a better future but a completely new involvement in the present.

In addition to the social aspects of the I.L.P.'s ethos was an equally important ingredient helping the party to mould itself to Lancashire conditions; this was its religious overtone. Such an assertion might at first seem strange since few of the prominent Lancashire figures, with the exception of Trevor and Brocklehurst, were men of a religious outlook. Clynes, Settle and Sexton, for example, were of Irish Catholic upbringing; Clynes had made his revolt against the priesthood complete by the age of ten, it appears (212), whilst the other two seem to have left religion behind when they reached adult years. The Clarion circle, moreover, was composed of irreverent agnostics, at least so it would seem judging by Blatchford's hostile articles on leading churchmen (213) and by his renunciation of religious faith in the early twentieth

century. Alex Thompson too felt little sympathy with the more sober, chapel-going I.L.P. leaders and was quite prepared to parody Keir Hardie in mocking terms as "the man of sorrows, with a crown of thorns on his brow, staggering up Calvary under the weight of his cross". (214) Had it been left to Blatchford the I.L.P. would have appeared as anti-religious as the S.D.F., promoting the obvious popularity of the Clarion fellowship with its Sunday outings and secular emphasis that did so much to arouse the condemnation of Hardie. But, on the other hand, it is possible to see why the I.L.P. appealed to many people of a religious background, for some aspects of its work bore an unmistakable resemblance to the missionary zeal of the more evangelical churches; these were, for instance the Clarion Vans, bringing the word to the people and the emotive biblical phrases in the speeches of Philip Snowden. These were characteristics of a party that had developed in a working class society where religion played a part, to a greater or lesser extent, in social life. Yet there was a more fundamental link between the socialism of the I.L.P. and religion, and this was expressed in the existence of the Labour Church.

It is worth remembering that the ethical appeal in the I.L.P.'s socialism coincided sharply with what were considered to be the basic ideals of the Christian faith. Capitalism, it could be claimed, was antipathetic to both and it is not surprising to find an agnostic like Clynes arguing that the great extremes of wealth and poverty that existed were sufficient to condemn society according to the Will of God. (215) Keir Hardie asserted that the principles of

Christianity were consistent with the policies of the I.L.P. (216), and this reasoning might be concluded thus:

"Christian men and women, you say harmony prevails in Heaven. Harmony cannot result in any society from the operation of the competitive principles of capitalism. Therefore Heaven must be a social state." (217)

So it was that for a time the I.L.P. was able to cement its social foundations by drawing upon its religious appeal.

Where the I.L.P. was an attack on the class system in society, the Labour Church expressed the working man's discontent with the class system in religion. It sprang from such attitudes as those revealed by an anonymous working man from Barnoldswick who wrote to the Northern Daily Telegraph in 1889 about the sanctimonious people who attended church "because it pays to be thought religious", who kept the mills open on Good Friday but closed the public houses, who regarded the irreligious with "cold indifference" and who behaved "as if they were afraid of a poor working man coming into contact with their cloth." (218) There were no exclusively working class religious groups in Lancashire comparable to the Secular and Ethical movements in London (219) and the Labour Church attempted to fulfil the need.

It was not entirely successful, always contributing more to the I.L.P. than to religion, though at first its founder, John Trevor, had made a conscientious attempt to bring religion to the masses. Trevor had arrived at Manchester in 1890 to take up the appointment as Unitarian Minister for Upper Brook Street Chapel. Until then his life had been a chequered one; he had travelled to Australia, practised as an architect and experienced both the rejection and

re-acceptance of religious faith. (220) The turning point came in 1888 when he was appointed assistant to Philip Wicksteed at the Little Portland Street Unitarian Chapel in London.

"Wicksteed was immediately drawn to Trevor, and Trevor to him". (221)

At Manchester Trevor quickly became dissatisfied with the established churches: "I wanted a religion that would place a man and a church side by side with God," he explained later (222);

"it became plain to me that I must go outside and throw myself wholly into the midst of self-conscious Labour movement." (223)

It was to Wicksteed, the scholar and social worker, that Trevor turned: "the Labour Church rested on Wicksteed's broad shoulders as long as I was connected with it" (224)

What sort of religion did Trevor create for the working man? The basis of the Labour church was woven into Trevor's five principles, (225) which created an essentially individualist creed. He saw God in the Labour movement, "working through it as once he had moved through Christianity;" (226) it therefore remained to develop the theme,

"making freedom and religion synonymous terms to the extent that the two be understood to be indissolubly united." (227)

In order to achieve this the historic religious elements were pared down, leaving a vague concept of God as the "Power" that brought men into being. (228) In consequence much religious significance was lost through Trevor's willingness to sever connections with the established churches; many people cannot have been absolutely clear about the Labour Church's standpoint, especially after its secretary

had declared "it has no clear policy - no distinct mission. It has a tendency rather than an aim." (229)

Its services were very secular; at the initial meeting of the Manchester and Salford Church proceedings were opened by an overture, played by a string band, a prayer and a song. The service was held, appropriately, in Chorlton Town Hall. The Labour Church had its own Hymn books and rites for baptism, marriage and burial. (230)

With this secular atmosphere the Church quickly became associated with the I.L.P. as a propaganda wing of the party. The connection is revealed by the location of Labour Churches; Lancashire was comparatively rich in them but their growth was tied to the development of the I.L.P. The earliest foundations were at Manchester, Bolton and Oldham; by September 1892 the Manchester Church had organised five meeting places in the different parliamentary divisions of the city. At the Labour Church conference of 1893 five Lancashire churches sent delegates - Accrington, Barrow Bolton, Manchester and Salford and Oldham. (281)

In other places where Churches existed attendances were poor. By 1899 there were only five Labour Churches active, at Bolton, Farnworth, Hyde, Rochdale and Manchester and Salford. (232)

Two of the Lancashire establishments were to enjoy long histories, those of Hyde and Stockport maintaining an existence until just after the Second World War.

Local I.L.P. branches often accounted for successful Labour Churches. In 1894 the party decided to encourage its branches "to run a Sunday meeting on Labour Church lines" (233) and as a result religion and politics became inextricably mixed. "The tone of the

movement is markedly secularist", noted the Labour Prophet, the organisation's journal, of the Rochdale Labour Church: "several of the Rochdale men objected strongly to the Labour Church as confounding religion with economics." (234) The most active Church during the 1890's was at Bolton, where B.J. Harker had converted his Congregational Chapel into a Labour Church in 1892. Its impetus was derived mainly from Fred. Brocklehurst's campaign as I.L.P. parliamentary candidate for the constituency in the 1895 General Election. Brocklehurst visited Bolton on many occasions between 1892 and 1895 and established a monthly journal, the Bolton and District I.L.P. Pioneer. He had graduated from Queen's College Cambridge in 1892 having worked in a Macclesfield factory as a boy. (235) His first thought was of becoming an Anglican clergyman but instead he decided to become a political agitator; nonetheless his editorials in the Pioneer were heavily laced with religious subjects; like many others he related socialism to the teachings of Jesus. (236) He organised welfare services for children in Bolton and in 1894 arranged for over two thousand free meals to be given to the needy as well as collecting a fund to send sick infants for a rest cure to the seaside. (237) Allen Clarke, the socialist writer and popular journalist, claimed that the Labour church would be the "most potent in that moral and social elevation of humanity known as Socialism, that Bolton has yet seen." (238)

By the late 1890's however, the movement was in obvious decline; H.C. Rowe, writing in the Labour Annual in 1895, ascribed

three functions - propaganda, education and social welfare - to the Labour Church. All three could be performed by other bodies. Trevor had suggested Labour Church Sunday Schools, but few appeared and the established churches maintained their most important influence through education. They were even able to challenge the social functions of the Labour Church once the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement had grown. In the last analysis, however, it was the aim of the Labour Church to keep alive the class struggle (240) and the danger was that this function could be better performed by the I.L.P. Trevor himself was partly to blame for the use of Labour Churches as political meeting places; he had originally admitted that

"the Labour Church platform should be accepted as an Independent Labour Party platform." (241)

His intention had been to keep the two organisations separate with his movement attempting to maintain "the supremacy of humanity" (242) in the political movement as a whole but many Labour Churches found themselves housed, financed and officered by the I.L.P. (243)

When it became apparent that Labour Churches were merely convenient meeting places for socialists on Sundays (244) Trevor denounced the trend as "a rotten foundation to build upon" (245) but the individual religious sustenance he had intended to provide for the worker became instead an agent for political change. When John Trevor fell ill in 1896 and went abroad for a time the movement lost what dynamism it had; most of the Lancashire branches had come to an end by the turn of the century and there were no significant foundations after then. (246) Dr. E. J. Hobsbawm's epitaph for the Labour Church - "its chief function was to lubricate the passage of

Northern workers from Liberal Radicalism to an Independent Labour Party and having done this is disappeared....." (247) certainly seems to be borne out by events in Lancashire.

6. Summary

As a party devoted to establishing an independent workers' platform in municipal and parliamentary politics the I.L.P. must be judged by its own aims. What had it achieved after the first three years of its life? Mainly, some useful propaganda which outlined a new course in politics from ^{might benefit; in municipal politics the ILP} which working people had some good ideas, but could it hope to become the executor of its own ideology? The experience of these first three years, culminating in the disappointments of the 1895 General Election, suggested that it would not, at least in the conditions of the time. It was recklessly optimistic to imagine that the I.L.P. (or the S.D.F.) could become the party of the working people in the near future; working class political divisions went far too deep to allow for any such complete conversion. The party's 40 odd Lancashire branches of the mid 1890's cannot have represented more than 2,000 active members and its showing at the parliamentary polls in 1895 confirmed its lack of appeal as a parliamentary force. The whole character of the movement suggested an *elitist* group that would require solid bases upon which to build. The trade unions could provide these bases. They offered the best hope for an independent working class party and if this was to be at all socialist in outlook then the I.L.P. would have an important role to play in it, as an exponent of ideology. But the future did not seem so clear in 1895. The disappointments of the socialist campaigns of the early 1890's had caused confusion in both the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. Was it better to pursue the Labour Alliance, and face a possible further rebuff by the unions, or to unite the two parties

and thus strengthen the socialist camp? The problem of strategy was to bulk large in the history of both parties during the next ten years.

PART III

DEVELOPMENT: THE CHARACTER OF LABOUR

The years from 1900 to 1906 were the formative ones in the establishment of a Labour party in the Lancashire industrial region. It was during this time that the trade unions, particularly the Lancashire Miners and the cotton workers, came to adopt an independent political line, neither Conservative nor Liberal, and to bring their influence to bear in working class voting.

The Labour Party in Lancashire was never a united organisation: that is to say, it was a collection of local parties that had developed in the towns throughout the region. As such, its political characteristics varied considerably from town to town. Nor was it simply a trade union body: the socialists played their part also and though in terms of sheer numbers they were very much junior partners they had in certain areas established a primacy in ideas and methods that other more purely trade union parties could never match. In assessing the development of the Labour party, therefore, the role of the socialist cannot be discounted.

In the three following chapters the interaction between socialism and trade unionism during the period 1895 to 1906 is surveyed. The problems examined are these; (i) the extent to which socialism had been established as a permanent feature of working class politics by 1900 and the subsequent effect on the socialist parties of the trade union revival: (ii) why the trade unions sharply swung round to independence at the turn of the century and how this affected the development of

local labour parties and (iii) how a radical recovery was made possible in the years 1900 to 1906 and how the incipient Labour party benefited from this in parliamentary politics.

Chapter 10

S.D.F., I.L.P. AND WORKING CLASS UNITY.

The sudden activity in working class politics of the early 1890's came to an end after the General Election of 1895, with its setbacks for all three major sections of the working class movement. The cotton and mining unions, which had provided the best hope for parliamentary success, now faced the prospect of a long interval before the next General Election. Any immediate political ventures on the part of the cotton unions were in any case out of the question because of the disbandment in 1896 of the United Textile Factory Workers' Association, following disagreements between the Spinners' and Weavers' unions over the legislative programme.⁽¹⁾ The disappointing situation in the cotton towns was represented in microcosm by the decision of the Nelson Weavers to discontinue intervention in municipal politics: the trade unions were withdrawing from their participation in embryonic labour alliances. In consequence, hopes for the continued vitality of independent working class politics devolved to the socialist parties.

1. The Socialists: Unity or Labour Alliance.

The future looked bleak. The S.D.F. retained some influence in the weaving towns but the Federation's failure to reconcile the two wings of the labour movement at Burnley led to a slump in its hitherto most promising area. Moreover, the loss of the Weavers' support at Nelson, caused by developing antagonism between socialist and radical workers, was a serious blow to the progress of a trade union based socialist movement in north east Lancashire. In the conurbations of Manchester

and Merseyside the S.D.F. had become an obscure sect; Manchester and Salford were almost completely taken over by the I.L.P. whilst the course of labour politics in Liverpool, where the S.D.F. had never been strong⁽²⁾ led to a decision by the Trades Council in 1896 to reject labour representation with socialists.⁽³⁾

For the remainder of the 1890's the S.D.F.'s network in Lancashire was fairly stagnant. The reasons for this were both psychological and physical. As a means of securing support the S.D.F. had relied to a great extent on its ability to exploit working class policies such as the Eight Hours Day and labour representation; on these issues the social democrats could find a fairly common meeting ground with trade unionists. The 1895 General Election effectively sealed the fate of these issues, for it demoralised working class groups and brought into power a Conservative government which offered no hope of dealing with advanced economic reforms. Without a receptive audience for its emotional appeals the S.D.F. was left equally demoralised and apathetic. The Election had opened up a political void necessitating a hard climb back to political prestige and this required renewed organisation at constituency level with success in municipal elections.

It seemed, however, that the social democrats had lost their appetite for hard work. George Lansbury made a tour of Lancashire for the S.D.F. in 1896 but found little evidence of active propaganda being

carried out: "I am a social man", he claimed, "and have no objection to clubs as clubs, but it should always be remembered that the first duty of a branch of the S.D.F. is to make socialists and not to provide cheap clubs".⁽⁴⁾ The general attitude was reflected in the lack of speakers; Abrahams, the Lancashire organising secretary, could call upon only fourteen lecturers to cover almost a hundred proposed meetings at the end of 1896: four years previously there had been fifty lecturers available, but no new ones had been enrolled since 1894.⁽⁵⁾ The number of active branches was never more than about ten during the late 'nineties. Support from London to help in municipal electioneering was sparse, for the same malaise was being felt nationally. In 1896 the Executive Council of the S.D.F. issued a model programme to concert the policies of local candidates, emphasising chiefly the need for the municipalisation of local services, such as coal, meat, milk, bread and drug supplies and calling attention to housing reform⁽⁶⁾; although candidates were sponsored by local branches in Lancashire their appearances were intermittent and successes isolated.⁽⁷⁾

The I.L.P. suffered the same fate as the S.D.F. during this period through lack of real political gains. Because of the party's social infrastructure, branch foundations were maintained but political interest declined. The I.L.P. claimed an impressive list of branches in Lancashire and Cheshire⁽⁸⁾ but a more significant sign of political activity was the number of these branches represented at the party's annual conference,

and on this basis the proportion was never more than a quarter before the turn of the century. Moreover the bulk of these branches continued to be those in the Manchester region. Isolated examples of local electioneering are to be found and usually in greater numbers than those for the S.D.F. but, once more, little success came the I.L.P.'s way. In 1897 the party polled just over 10,000 votes in municipal elections, with eighteen candidates, but in most instances the I.L.P. men came at the bottom of the poll in a three cornered contest.⁽⁹⁾ By 1900 there were a few representatives on school boards and borough councils but they were the sole socialists, in most instances, alongside a phalanx of Conservatives and Liberals and consequently had no chance of forcing through their policies.⁽¹⁰⁾

The local Lancashire parties were in much the same position as the National I.L.P.: poor organisation had resulted in low finances.⁽¹¹⁾ Initiative at branch level was sagging and too many trivial problems were being referred to the National Administrative Council, a situation which led J. R. MacDonald to despair of the branches' readiness to be "bossed".⁽¹²⁾ By the late 1890's the I.L.P. News, which MacDonald had made into a monthly party circular out of the former Annual Report, was calling attention to the problems created by the proliferation of branches a few years earlier - laxity in the payment of capitation fees, neglect of basic duties and sheer inefficiency.⁽¹³⁾ Whilst these were not grounds upon which to build a successful political movement some branches

continued to cherish the wildest hopes; Barrow-in-Furness I.L.P., for instance, wanted to sponsor an I.L.P. candidate in a General Election, even though it had made no moves in local elections since 1893 and had no prospects of finding a reliable person to stage a campaign.⁽¹⁴⁾

The position in Lancashire was not improved by the discord developing between many branches and the National Administrative Council on questions of general policy. Through common experiences some local party groups were discovering the congeniality of Robert Blatchford's views on socialist unity; although Blatchford was now operating in London his influence among Lancashire socialists had not diminished and he was continually pressing the schemes for socialist unity which had first appeared in the Clarion during 1894. His personal animosity towards J. K. Hardie was as strong as ever,⁽¹⁵⁾ thus proving an additional strain in the relations between Lancashire and the party's National executive.

In 1896 the N.A.C. re-opened negotiations with the S.D.F. on the question of a fusion of the two parties.⁽¹⁶⁾ Lancashire pressure for the scheme was strong and at the annual I.L.P. conference of 1896 Fred Brocklehurst of Manchester introduced a motion to change the party's name to that of "National Socialist Party"⁽¹⁷⁾; since at this stage nothing had been decided with the S.D.F. delegates appeared willing to await the outcome of negotiations and consequently Brocklehurst's proposal

was rejected. When it became known, however, that the N.A.C. had refused the S.D.F.'s terms for straight forward fusion ⁽¹⁸⁾ the reaction of Lancashire branches was instant. Although some of the more moderate I.L.P. members from the comparatively successful branches in the Manchester area proved to be supporters of a gradual move towards fusion ⁽¹⁹⁾ there were many who felt that the National Administrative Council was cheating the party by insisting on an overwhelming vote in favour of fusion from the branches. Moreover the N.A.C. now began to recommend the idea of federation with the S.D.F., and this scheme did receive a majority of supporters in a ballot of I.L.P. members in 1898. ⁽²⁰⁾ But since the S.D.F. in turn rejected this idea, it was dropped. The N.A.C. had pointed out that "in Blackburn, Nelson, Rochdale, Ashton and several other places the local branches of the I.L.P. and S.D.F. already work cordially side by side and for elections and many propaganda purposes are already virtually federated together." ⁽²¹⁾ There was much truth in this assertion, to be sure, but the effect of co-operation on the lines pointed out was to make a policy of fusion all the more desirable. Littleborough I.L.P. called for "one militant Socialist party"; the parties at Droylsden and Preston refused to enter the I.L.P.'s second ballot because they had already voted firmly in favour of fusion; Bolton West, Everton and Blackburn opposed the N.A.C. and Stockport announced its withdrawal from the I.L.P. "as a protest against the undemocratic action of the N.A.C." ⁽²²⁾ The Lancashire arguments were clarified by Charles Higham of Blackburn at the 1899 conference of the I.L.P. at Leeds.

He spoke of the "excellent working arrangement" between the S.D.F. and I.L.P. in his own town, an arrangement which, he claimed, illustrated the ridiculous position of the N.A.C. in keeping the two parties separate and he went on to accuse the Council Members of self interest for choosing the course they took. Higham's speech gained some support from London delegates but the debate ended with the N.A.C.'s position affirmed. (23)

What exactly was the situation in Lancashire which caused so many branches to engage in a spirited attack on party policy? By examining in detail some of the more active groups in the region a closer understanding of the problems facing socialists may be gained.

During 1896 and 1897 the N.A.C. had been attempting to foster co-operation by proposing a joint congress of socialists and trade unionists. (24) In Lancashire such a move seemed too ambitious, for the socialists were still a long way from holding influence in any of the major trade unions or trades councils. The limits of socialist infiltration were narrow; at Burnley the Trades Council had two socialist leaders in John Markham and John Sparling in 1898. Both were S.D.F. veterans, active in early years, though Markham was no longer a Weavers' official whilst Sparling, who was becoming more and more involved in the local Miners' Association, had actually left the S.D.F. in 1896. (25) In any case the local Weavers, who made up the bulk of the Trades Council's membership, were still dominated by the Liberal Labourite, David Holmes, who was assisted by

a new secretary, Fred Thomas, himself a Liberal town councillor by the turn of the century. At Manchester the I.L.P. was beginning to see some of its trade union members secure seats on the Trades Council executive committee; notable among them was J. E. Sutton of the Bradford Miners, a socialist city councillor, and John Harker of the Shirt and Jacket Cutters. Nuttall, of the Block Roller and Stamp Cutters, joined them in 1897 when George Tabbron, the social democrat, became the Trades Council's vice-president.⁽²⁶⁾ During that year the Council had worked with the local I.L.P. to secure labour representation on the School Board with the result that Nuttall and Brocklehurst were elected, to support a progressive education policy.⁽²⁷⁾ In another trades council where the socialists had some influence, that of Oldham, the results were not so encouraging. J. R. Clynes remained secretary and though nominally an I.L.P. member his connections with the party were becoming increasingly tenuous as his trade union responsibilities increased; in 1897 he took on the job of Lancashire District Secretary of the Gasworkers' Union, with whom he had formerly been a district organiser.⁽²⁸⁾ He had been the Oldham delegate to I.L.P. conferences in 1894 and 1895 but in following years handed this position over to an Oldham colleague, James Smith, in order to concentrate on union work, especially in building up the Trades Council membership after the Spinners' secession of 1895.⁽²⁹⁾ The loss of Clynes' dynamic intervention had a startling effect on the Oldham I.L.P.; without easy gains in the trade union field the branch became ineffective and had ultimately to appeal to the N.A.C. for help

in reorganisation. Kèir Hardie and J. B. Glasier visited the town in 1898 to address a large meeting at which, significantly, Clynes occupied the chair.⁽³⁰⁾ Thereafter a more resolute approach to propaganda and organisation was adopted with Clynes once more appearing for Oldham at National conferences.

Clearly, therefore, the conversion of trade unionists to socialism was not easily realised; whilst most trades councils were fairly progressive in policy it was a different matter when it came to making them the backbone of an independent, socialist led, labour party. In the minds of many socialists it was an equally practicable and certainly more praiseworthy effort to concentrate on the mass conversion of the working class. For this aim, it was thought, socialist unity was needed.

The histories of some of the more active socialist movements in Lancashire in the years immediately preceding the foundation of the Labour Representation Committee show that socialist unity also offered the more important short-term hope of survival. The two most vigorous groups outside Manchester were those at Blackburn and Rochdale. Blackburn had a strong tradition of Conservatism but no socialist movement worth speaking of before 1897⁽³¹⁾, when Joseph Burgess of the I.L.P. proposed to contest a bye-election in the town. The local Trades Council had been established in 1889 and by the early 'nineties had been successful in achieving the abolition of gas meter rents. There was usually a trade union representative in the borough council but this was insufficient

pressure to affect questions of major importance such as the Fair Contracts clause, which the Corporation rejected outright in 1897. The decision was a telling one and led the Trades Council secretary, Maguire, to remark that "when it is anything affecting the working man that has to be considered both of the orthodox parties combine to crush him."⁽³²⁾ In spite of this, the Trades Council refused to co-operate with the incipient socialist party in municipal elections and refrained from giving official support to Burgess, clinging to its established policy of prosecuting purely trade union work.⁽³³⁾

The socialist group was kept active through the co-operation of the I.L.P. and S.D.F., which produced a body of leaders of exceptional vigour and ability. Prominent among them were Hurley of the Gasworkers, a social democrat who became vice-president of the Trades Council in 1899, and Fleming Eccles, later to become a national official of the trade unions in the chemical industry. This foothold in the local trade unions meant that the socialists were not completely hostile to, or divorced from, the union mentality. Additional factors helping them were in the first place the absence of a local radical party which could claim working class support and secondly an excellent socialist newspaper, the Blackburn Labour Journal. It first appeared in September 1897 and by 1900 claimed a circulation of six and a half thousand in the district; the journal was a monthly, produced by a group of socialists under the direction of Charles Higham of the I.L.P. Its catholic views included

support for the idea of trade union federation, prompted by the Engineers' lock-out of 1897-8,⁽³⁴⁾ and municipal social reform; "only by the collective control and ownership of the means of life can poverty be abolished".⁽³⁵⁾ All work on the paper, which was technically independent of the S.D.F. and I.L.P., was conducted voluntarily but it raised money by public subscriptions, advertising charges and its selling price of a penny. It fulfilled admirably the socialists' need for communication.

In electoral policy the socialists were rewarded with regular small successes; in 1897 the I.L.P. had secured a representative on the borough council but the first attempt at co-operation with the S.D.F. appears to have been in 1898 in the election of a borough auditor. Hurley won the contest and the stimulus encouraged 8 socialist candidates in the Board of Guardians contest of the same year: two were returned.⁽³⁶⁾ With two further victories in the November municipal elections the socialist group now had three councillors, and since the Trades Council had also increased its representation to three the Liberal party, with ten representatives, was seriously threatened as the left-wing opposition to the Conservatives in the borough council. But lack of harmony between the socialist and trade union councillors inhibited a coalition, and with the socialists steadfastly refusing to join a progressive alliance with the Liberals⁽³⁷⁾ their "Glasgow style"⁽³⁸⁾ policies of municipal reform at first achieved little.

An important development took place in 1899. As a result of its disappointing ventures into the work of lobbying for a Fair Contracts clause, the Trades Council decided to prosecute political action with increased earnestness⁽³⁹⁾; at the 1899 municipal elections the socialists, with six candidates, took the unprecedented step of supporting a non-socialist trade union candidate.⁽⁴⁰⁾ This action brought about a freer relationship with the Trades Council and although only Hurley was successful among the candidates of the new alliance at least the Labour party could find solace in the fact that with eight councillors it had achieved parity with the Liberals. "Poor dwindling Liberal party", announced the Labour Journal, "every year witnesses another damaging defeat for it."⁽⁴¹⁾

By 1900, therefore, the Blackburn socialists had created a labour alliance in which they retained a major voice. The prospects for a socialist led Labour party, once the initial difficulties between socialist and non-socialist councillors could be overcome,⁽⁴²⁾ appeared to be greatly improved. The crucial event which affirmed the Labour advance in Blackburn and assisted its future development was the appearance of Philip Snowden.

Snowden was born at Cowling, just inside Yorkshire, in 1864. As a youth he had lived at Nelson with his family but after the death of his father he returned to Yorkshire, where he was at first attracted to Liberalism through the pressure of the weaving community in which he lived. In the mid-nineties he became a socialist and made his mark as

a local politician of note by sitting on both the Cowling Parish Council and School Board. In 1899 he was elected to the Keighley Town Council.⁽⁴³⁾ Snowden's principal political assets were a keen intellect and an incomparable oratical prowess; though not a practising Christian he had experienced a Wesleyan upbringing and knew how to infuse his speeches with a religious fervour; sometime during 1895 he had joined the I.L.P., for which his first major address was on the subject of "religion and socialism" and was a resounding success; he carried on the Labour Church tradition of the Christianity of socialism and perfected it into a powerful platform technique. His brilliantly incisive oratory, especially on economic questions, brought him into national prominence so quickly that he was co-opted on to the N.A.C. of the I.L.P. in 1899 following the resignation of Pete Curran. In 1900 he accepted the invitation of the Blackburn socialists to be their parliamentary candidate⁽⁴⁴⁾, and as a convinced parliamentarian who believed in evolutionary socialism he won the support of the Trades Council. Most of the money to finance his campaign seems to have come from I.L.P. sources, though there was a local parliamentary election fund which helped to support the cost.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Snowden fought against the chauvinism of the Boer War in a town depressed by a temporary slump in the cotton trade. He spoke against reductions in wages - "an insane process" - which involved the reduction also in the working man's purchasing power, already too low.⁽⁴⁶⁾ In addition he argued for the public ownership of industry, an eight hour day and complete adult suffrage. He rejected revolutionary shibboleths,

such as the abolition of the Royal Family, and concentrated upon measures which would materially improve the social and economic condition of the working people.⁽⁴⁷⁾ The campaign was assisted by the absence of a Liberal candidate so that Snowden faced the two Tories alone; he was given the moral support of the radical Northern Daily Telegraph and some local Liberal clubs sent volunteers to help his campaign workers.⁽⁴⁸⁾ By his close association with the socialist Hurley, a Catholic, Snowden managed to secure a substantial Catholic vote; he won over 7,000 votes and his campaign—"a new era in electioneering"⁽⁴⁹⁾ showed that with better organisation and more favourable circumstances Blackburn could be won by a socialist labour candidate.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Few other Lancashire towns could match the progress made in Blackburn by Socialist unity. But even here success turned on the tacit acceptance by the socialist of the need for trade union support: "We uphold trade unionism because it has been, and is, the bulwark of the workers against capitalist aggression."⁽⁵¹⁾

The Rochdale socialists had initially promised at least as much: in 1895 the I.L.P. parliamentary candidate had been the socialist trade union official G. N. Barnes, who had fought a creditable campaign, and shortly afterwards the S.D.F. had begun to co-operate extensively with the I.L.P. A monthly paper, the Rochdale Labour News, was circulated and encouragement was given to Clarion cycling clubs, field classes and educational groups. By these means it was hoped to attract women members. Efforts were made to engage nationally known speakers, such as Ramsay MacDonald. In addition to the comradeship provided in the separate clubs

of the two socialist parties, joint political meetings were held at the Labour Hall. The Labour News became the focal point for the movement's political work: "It is a medium whereby all municipal jobbery, extravagance and incapacity will be exposed."⁽⁵²⁾ The socialists, or Progressive Movement as they preferred to be called, concentrated on pressing the municipal council to grant as many social reforms as its powers allowed: in its first programme the party demanded greater endeavour on the part of the Corporation in public works, including the conferring of an eight hour day and standard wage rates on all municipal employees; public purchase of the tramways and markets was suggested as well as control over housing and the provision of public parks.⁽⁵³⁾ The object was to improve living conditions; "We want", stated the Labour News, "to take possession of our Town Council in order to control the affairs of our town for the improvement of the lives of its inhabitants - destruction of slums and the erection of better houses; improved sanitation and C."⁽⁵⁴⁾

The failure to achieve a solid socialist front for the realisation of these aims was due to the lack of working class unity. Firstly, Rochdale was a town of strong working class radicalism; the cotton unions and the Trades Council were nominally independent of politics but many of their members owed allegiance to the Liberals. At the same time the socialists found no other union on which they could base a labour alliance, for their only representative in the Trades Council was Hacking, a member

of the relatively minor Bakers' union.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The Labour News began to attack trade unionism, which it regarded as a reactionary movement unable to grapple with the real problems of the working class⁽⁵⁶⁾, whilst supporting a weak policy of compromise which advised socialists, prior to the political breakthrough of their own party, to give their votes to the candidates of other parties who would champion measures of reform.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Inevitably the socialist cause suffered and electioneering brought nothing; before 1899, when the Progressives returned their nominee for the minor post of borough auditor, there was only one I.L.P. representative in an elected body - the School Board. Severe defeats were regularly experienced at the polls by a handful of candidates⁽⁵⁸⁾.

1900 represented no advance for working class forces at Rochdale from the position of 1895. The socialist candidate was C. Allen Clarke, a former student teacher who had become a well know journalist during the 'nineties for his work with the Cotton Factory Times and later as the free-lance humourist "Teddy Ashton". Clarke was a Bolton man and had been associated with the socialist movement in that town, but though he was a well respected dialect writer he did not possess the personal qualities needed to rouse the Rochdale electorate. His 900 votes was a poor performance.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Yet even this was an improvement on the type of socialist campaign which attempted to live on thin air; Accrington represented such an instance, where John Hemsall secured only 433 votes in a fight against the Liberals and Conservatives.⁽⁶⁰⁾

By the turn of the century, therefore, events were beginning to show that socialist unity by itself was a less successful formula for electoral progress than was the labour alliance. The example of Blackburn displayed the vitality in local politics of co-operation between trade unionists and socialist parties, whilst the narrow policy of socialist unity pursued at Rochdale seemed to have no future.

2. Towards the Labour Alliance

Two more examples may be taken to demonstrate the opportunities offered by a broadly based socialist labour party. At Pendlebury, in the Eccles parliamentary division, the I.L.P. began to contest municipal elections in the late 1890's; Pendlebury and Swinton were two towns in a thoroughly working class mining district where housing conditions were bad and public amenities, such as baths and libraries, non-existent. Social reform, especially in the fields of housing and health, became the foremost policy of the I.L.P., matched against the District Council's insistence on keeping down the rates.⁽⁶¹⁾ The I.L.P. newspaper, the Pioneer, carried articles in the summer of 1899 revealing the insanitary conditions of working men's houses and informing occupiers of their rights in respect of the public health laws.⁽⁶²⁾ It was suggested that the local authorities take over control of house building in order to ensure decent standards and when the argument was raised that municipal housing schemes were uneconomic the I.L.P. prepared a comprehensive survey to point out that the Council could compete successfully with the private builder.⁽⁶³⁾ Thereafter the I.L.P. concentrated upon returning men to the Council who

could perform the task. In 1899 the Pendlebury Miners, led by Thomas Greenall, and the local engineering union combined with the I.L.P. in the District Council elections to sponsor two successful Labour candidates.⁽⁶⁴⁾ In the following year they were joined by a third Labour councillor,⁽⁶⁵⁾ and the small but vigorous party was giving priority in its pressure for welfare measures to combat the high death and infant mortality rates.⁽⁶⁶⁾

With experience and drive these results had every chance of being improved upon. Manchester supplied a good example for the Pendlebury men. The Manchester and Salford I.L.P. was the biggest party in Lancashire and possessed an unusual concentration of talent; in addition to its early leaders - Brocklehurst, Hall, Harker and Bilcliffe - there had risen to prominence by the late 90's a number of trade unionists, of which J. E. Sutton was the most influential. He had been elected I.L.P. City Councillor in 1894 by the miners' vote in Bradford Ward and during three continuous terms of office he campaigned for better working class housing, the municipalisation of the local tramways and an eight hour day for municipal workmen.⁽⁶⁷⁾ The party itself had achieved some notoriety in 1896 from the Boggart Hole Clough incidents, when Brocklehurst and Hall were imprisoned for defying a City Council ban on political meetings in a public park.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Whilst this gave the I.L.P. some free publicity it was nevertheless an old style of socialist propaganda and less important for the party's development than the political bargains made during the next few years.

The Manchester I.L.P., with a large body of trade unionists within its ranks, did not share the same hostility towards trade unions as the socialists of, for example, Rochdale. Since the early 'nineties the party had been co-operating with the Trades Council and was even beginning to see the value of combining with radical Progressive parties; although the I.L.P. reaffirmed its belief in the Fourth Clause⁽⁶⁹⁾ it was no longer used as a tool of extremism; at the 1897 School Board election the I.L.P. could willingly work with the Progressive Alliance to return two candidates.⁽⁷⁰⁾

In municipal elections a modified version of the 1893 I.L.P. programme provided the basis of socialist policy⁽⁷¹⁾ and continued to threaten the Liberal party, which before its reorganisation of 1903 was still facing the dilemma of how to capture the working class vote without admitting more labour candidates.⁽⁷²⁾ The mutual hostility between the Liberals and the combined forces of the I.L.P. and Trades Council was intensified in 1899 when the labour candidates at Harpurhey and St. Marks wards were directly opposed by Liberal candidates.⁽⁷³⁾ In the School Board election of the next year, however, there were signs that a closer understanding was developing since the Progressive party, a left-wing alliance which was less directly under the control of the Liberal caucus, was able to gain the support of the I.L.P. and the Trades Council in its attempt to "free the School Boards" of Manchester and Salford.⁽⁷⁴⁾ The United Education Party, as it was called, failed to achieve its object⁽⁷⁵⁾ and this event, coupled with the growing self-assurance of the Labour alliance, proved the decisive break between Liberal and Labour in the two cities.

Further progress in the Manchester I.L.P. would have been impossible without efficient organisation. Financial shortages were a problem as well as the obvious hazards of co-ordinating work over a large area. In 1898 financial membership had dropped to the low figure of 268; by the spring of 1899 this number had been doubled but the party was still struggling to start a campaign for "1,000 new members."⁽⁷⁶⁾ The problem of recruiting activists was exacerbated by the extra burden of Brocklehurst's parliamentary campaign at South West Manchester which required constant attention. Furthermore most I.L.P. local branches were in the working class districts of the city and operated independently for municipal electioneering; they were generally short of money, as a result of which their organising work suffered. For instance the unsuccessful Harpurhey campaign of 1899 cost £45 but the party executive committee had to raise two thirds of this amount, with the surplus collected by means of an additional levy of one shilling from each party member.⁽⁷⁷⁾

The work of the party secretary, Joe Nuttall, became overwhelming, especially since he was also involved in Brocklehurst's election campaign as agent. The candidate himself shared the work at the head office for a time and sub-committees were appointed to supervise arrangements for finance, propaganda and literature.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Nuttall had relied upon a system of "district captains", copied from the Liberal party⁽⁷⁹⁾ to keep the districts functioning, but the scheme had not met with a great deal of success; when Nuttall retired from his position as secretary temporarily in 1900 to take more complete charge of the parliamentary campaign his

place was taken by Thomas Gunning, a shoemaker, who set about to increase the efficiency of organisation. Gunning realised that the party was losing vigour; it was not merely a question of enthusiasm: "no set of men and women can remain always at a white heat pitch of enthusiasm."⁽⁸⁰⁾ He concentrated therefore on reducing the burden on voluntary workers, aiming at more efficient canvassing and a more thorough collection of individuals' subscriptions. To achieve this Gunning cut down the size of the areas covered by teams of canvassers and registration workers, subdividing Nuttall's "districts" and creating "sub-captains" for neighbourhoods, each captain to be personally acquainted with individual voters. This system also enabled permanent communications to be maintained with the central office, which was consequently kept well informed of problems in the wards.

The effect of Gunning's reforms was to help the Manchester I.L.P. retain its vitality as a partner in the labour alliance and created a sound system of organisation for the increased membership which was to come with the establishment of a local Labour Representation Committee in Manchester and Salford.

By 1900 the socialist movement in Lancashire had arrived at a cross-roads in its development. No common policy had emerged in the years since 1895. For some local parties socialist unity offered the main hope of future growth, but those which had been most forward in condemning the retreat from fusion in 1898 - Littleborough, Preston, Bolton, Everton, Stockport, and Blackburn - had been those which, with the exception of

Blackburn, had experienced least success with trade union infiltration; socialist unity, on the other hand, merely prevented significant development. Yet the socialist parties committed to the labour alliance - Manchester, Pendlebury, Blackburn and, after the renewal of political activity by the Weavers' Association in 1901, Nelson - had established a sound foothold in a movement which was to grow after the formation of the national Labour Representation Committee in 1900 and the trade union revival in the early 1900's.

The socialist parliamentary candidatures of 1900 underlined this trend. At Rochdale and Ashton-under-Lyne the candidates of local socialist alliances received shattering defeats.⁽⁸¹⁾ At Preston and South West Manchester Keir Hardie and Fred Brocklehurst polled adequately, though in both the contests there was no Liberal opposition. Hardie, who also stood at Merthyr Tydvil, had high hopes of winning Preston and concentrated his main energies there; but he made no headway against his two Tory opponents and was even attacked by the Liberal Lancashire Daily Post.⁽⁸²⁾ With Hardie's 4834 votes socialism in Preston had made no progress since the campaign of Tattersall, of the I.L.P., in 1895. Brocklehurst had to contend not only with radical attacks but with criticism from within his own party; Russell Smart, editor of the I.L.P. News, sharply rebuked Brocklehurst for his apparent support of the War whilst the Tory press nonetheless chastised him for being a pro-Boer. The antagonism caused some dissension within the Manchester I.L.P.⁽⁸³⁾ Brocklehurst secured 2398 votes, but might have fared better with greater financial resources.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Only Philip Snowden's campaign gave cause to boast.

None of the socialist candidates were trade unionists and it is significant that the only trade union sponsored candidate in Lancashire at the 1900 General Election came within 500 votes of success. He was William Ward, a Gorton schoolmaster who had connections with the Manchester I.L.P. His candidature at Gorton was sponsored by the local Trades Council with the support of the Liberal party, and whilst he united radical forces under one flag there was not overt socialist influence involved.⁽⁸⁵⁾ The national L.R.C., which would have been willing to give Ward its official support, was unable to since neither the Gorton Trades Council nor Ward's union were affiliated.⁽⁸⁶⁾

During the next few years labour and liberal politics experienced a sharp upswing in Lancashire; political and industrial circumstances once more forced the big trade unions back on to a labour path whilst the Liberal party was able to benefit from the mistakes and divisions of the Conservatives. But was it too late for a general socialist revival?

3. The S.D.F. and the L.R.C.

The foundation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900, with its avowed intent of creating a national network of labour alliances, created immediate problems for both socialist parties in Lancashire. The I.L.P. had worked to bring about such an organisation so that it could act "in all that concerned the welfare of the workers in a manner free and unhampered by entanglements with other parties."⁽⁸⁷⁾ Now it blanched at the prospect of being unable to influence its creature because of its own weakness in the trade union world. For the S.D.F. the problems

were more serious because even more fundamental. The S.D.F. leadership was not so eager to work with trade unions which were blatantly non-socialists and Quelch, the editor of Justice, was the most strongly opposed of all social democrats to an alliance with men who had "no conception of the class war."⁽⁸⁸⁾ He was able to lead the S.D.F. out of the L.R.C. in 1901 after only a years membership. This decision was reached at the Birmingham conference of the S.D.F. in August and received fairly general support from delegates. It was later affirmed that "logic at the time appeared all on the side of withdrawal from the L.R.C."⁽⁸⁹⁾; but in fact the issue was not so clearly drawn.

The S.D.F. lacked political power in most parts of the country and Lancashire was no exception. Progress here had been minimal since the mid 'nineties and even the old established branches were meeting with scant success in local elections.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Moreover, a debate on strategy had developed within the ranks of the Federation with some of the more extreme branches in London and Scotland advocating an "intelligent prosecution of the class war" and repudiating all connection with those who did not endorse this view. Quelch, in spite of his hostility to the L.R.C., proved equally intransigent towards the "impossibilists", asserting that the S.D.F. was "possibilist and opportunist."⁽⁹¹⁾ Lancashire was unaffected by the new heterodoxy⁽⁹²⁾ but failed to give a clear lead; many branches were at loggerheads over tactics and the overall position in the country was ambiguous. Blackburn, for instance, supported Quelch on the question of socialist unity even though the branch was itself engaged in a Labour alliance; Accrington S.D.F., on the other hand, advised the movement to

"permeate and capture the trade unions."⁽⁹³⁾ Dan Irving, who, as chairman of the 1901 conference and a representative of the respected Burnley branch, might have lent some influence to the discussions, failed to point one way or the other, merely calling for more socialist representatives on democratic bodies "to waken up people."⁽⁹⁴⁾ It is possible that the S.D.F. did not regard its withdrawal from the L.R.C. as a particularly decisive event at the time; the new body made slow progress during 1900 - 1901 and the next General Election seemed far in the distance; neither were social democrats excluded from participating with L.R.C.'s in local elections, only in parliamentary ones, so it seemed that the Federation still had plenty of time and scope to manoeuvre.

Consequently S.D.F. tactics continued to be much the same as before. At Blackburn, in spite of occasional friction, the local party worked well with the I.L.P. and the Labour Journal continued to bear strong signs of social democratic influence in its advocacy of the class war.⁽⁹⁵⁾ A Socialist Labour party sat in the borough council, generally supporting the Liberals against the Conservative majority⁽⁹⁶⁾; in 1904 five labour candidates, four of whom were socialists, were successful in the Board of Guardians election.⁽⁹⁷⁾ At Burnley the social democrats remained opponents of the radical elements in the Weavers' Association and the Trades Council, but in 1904 the S.D.F. at last persuaded the Trades Council to experiment with a labour alliance; fourteen candidates were sponsored in the 1901 Board of Guardians election, but the results were alarmingly poor, with only one success. The 1905 municipal elections did not see much improvement.⁽⁹⁸⁾

Although the new alliance was not altogether harmonious, the Weavers' Association being recalcitrant, a significant reaction to the working class coalition was seen when Irving was defeated in his 1905 campaign by an anti-socialist party of the more extreme Liberals and Conservatives. A dimly perceptible polarisation seemed to be taking place.

In other towns the S.D.F. was not so active. Where there was no branch, or only an incipient one, it was becoming increasingly difficult to establish political work if an L.R.C. had been planted. At Nelson the S.D.F. rump, which had remained since 1892, was nurturing its aim of contesting the Clitheroe division with a social democratic candidate; the intention proved difficult of realisation, however, for the L.R.C. was at the same time negotiating with the cotton unions to run David Shackleton for the seat. Shackleton, a trade unionist with a Liberal background, was unacceptable to the S.D.F.⁽⁹⁹⁾ but was adopted by the L.R.C., and this fact prevented any further action on the part of the S.D.F., who admitted their failure.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ It was a particularly disappointing situation for them since only three months previously, at the 1902 S.D.F. Conference, they had suffered the rejection of their proposal that the Federation should re-join the L.R.C.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Furthermore, as a result of a personal quarrel between Philip Snowden of the I.L.P. and an S.D.F. speaker relations between the two parties seriously weakened and a correspondent in Justice claimed to perceive a "decided rupture between the ranks of the I.L.P. and the S.D.F." in Nelson.⁽¹⁰²⁾

Equally, it was becoming more difficult to swell social democratic influence within the trade unions once the L.R.C. had started to grow. After 1901 S.D.F. representation from Lancashire was severely reduced at L.R.C. conferences; Atkinson of the Paper Stainers' continued to attend as his union's delegate, often accompanied by Hacking of the Rochdale Trades Council. Atkinson was a firm supporter of the Labour Alliance and owed his political success in Darwen, where he was a member of the School Board,⁽¹⁰³⁾ to co-operation with the I.L.P. and local trade unions, particularly those of the paper mill workers. At L.R.C. conferences he presented a reasoned standpoint for a strong and independent socialist labour party,⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ and the S.D.F. suffered greatly through not having more of his kind to exert their influence. As it was, the S.D.F. had no spokesman in any of the Lancashire unions which affiliated to the L.R.C. after 1903.

Nevertheless the S.D.F. proved itself capable of growth. In 1900 there had been less than ten active branches in Lancashire, and fewer were operating in the early months of 1903. The federation had seemed in danger of extinction but quite the reverse happened; by the summer of 1904 there were 26 branches and at the end of 1906 over 40, the most ever achieved in the region. Three developments accounted for this growth.

Firstly, the anti-Conservative sentiments which took hold among the working class during the closing years of Balfour's government provided a stimulus as much to the S.D.F. as to other socialist and radical groups. New members were brought into the movement and former ones drawn back by the feelings raised over Tariff Reform, Taff Vale and Chinese Slavery. Second,

the S.D.F. was able to present original policies to meet these circumstances. In the face of Tariff Reform the S.D.F. displayed its independence by attacking both free trade and protection, as Hyndman did at the Free Trade Hall in 1903⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. The S.D.F. Election manifesto for 1906 was a more strident article of progressive socialist reform than that provided by the L.R.C.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾, which clung to the coat tails of the Liberal party by resisting change. One field in which the S.D.F. made an important contribution was in the problems of unemployment; at a period of slump in the Lancashire textile trade the S.D.F. branches in the county took up their old rallying cry, organising demonstrations of jobless workers and forming a committee of City councillors and trade unionists in Manchester to press for a parliamentary bill to deal with unemployment.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ This earned the S.D.F. a victory in the Board of Guardians election, one of the few electoral successes gained by the party in that city for more than a decade. In connection with this agitation social democrats also began to urge the free maintenance of needy school children, an idea later embraced by the Trades Union Congress and the L.R.C.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

A third reason for the S.D.F. revival was to be found in improved organisation. The Federation had at this time received considerable financial assistance from Lady Warwick, who had become associated politically with Hyndman during 1903,⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ but the greater degree of liquidity attained through her gifts would have been only marginally advantageous without the hard work of a provincial organiser. In London, for example, the S.D.F. "remained virtually stagnant"⁽¹¹⁰⁾ in the years before 1906 and the same

might have been true of Lancashire without the efforts of Dan Irving.

Although busily occupied with his work in Burnley ⁽¹¹¹⁾ Irving had agreed in 1901 to become the Lancashire District Secretary of the S.D.F.; he found the Lancashire District Federation to be "in a state of suspended animation." His diagnosis of the condition was: "it's not dead, 'tis but sleeping, only the sleep seems too heavy to be healthy."⁽¹¹²⁾ Many branches had in fact grown deeply in debt to the Federation over lax payment of subscriptions and a fair reflection of interest was manifested in May 1902 when a meeting was convened at Burnley to discuss re-organisation; only six branches were represented.⁽¹¹³⁾ It was nonetheless decided to disband the old District Federation, a relic of the 'eighties, and give Irving the responsibility of shaking the branches out of their inertia by collecting as much money as he could from them directly.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

During the first two years little progress was made by this method, and it was only after the political issues of the day had begun to stir people's imagination that S.D.F. branches started to pay their dues promptly and arrange regular meetings, a situation which enabled Irving to organise a programme of speakers. An additional factor which helped considerably was the arrival in Lancashire of Bill Gee, the social democratic lecturer who acted almost as a full time organiser in the region - I.L.P. style.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ Gee had originally worked with the S.D.F. at Northampton and had later chosen to range the country as an itinerant speaker; he was frequently announced as "the Socialist Dreadnought" and his animated style of speaking and his waxed

moustache soon became a common sight in Lancashire towns. As a result of these efforts Irving was able to hand over his position to A. H. Watson in 1905 with the number of S.D.F. branches still growing, so that by 1906 the S.D.F. was once more a lively left wing party with plenty of room in which to work, as the success of Dick Greenwood's "Lancashire Red Van" showed in 1908.⁽¹¹⁶⁾

A sad postscript to this newly found vigour, however, was the dismal record of S.D.F. candidates in elections. With the opportunities for representation decreased by the abolition of School Boards in 1902 and the party shut out of the growing L.R.C. it was hardly surprising that although the S.D.F. increased its numbers of candidates few could find success. Of the 19 candidates sponsored in 1905 only 7 were returned, and of these 4 won in elections at Blackburn and Accrington, where socialist groups were operating within the Labour Alliance. In 1902 the S.D.F. branches at Nelson and Burnley had proposed reaffiliation with the L.R.C. but their move was defeated.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ Harry Quelch continued to defend his position, urging that it was "necessary to be free from an alliance by which the S.D.F. would be bound, willy nilly, to support men and measures with whom, and with which, it did not agree,"⁽¹¹⁸⁾ but the rank and file in Lancashire were in general convinced by 1905 that social democratic participation would be to the benefit of both the S.D.F. and the L.R.C.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ During that year Lancashire made its strongest bid to change the Federation's policy. Led by Dan Irving the Lancashire delegates at the S.D.F. Conference demanded both socialist unity,

a course favoured by the Quelch group, and a rapprochement with the L.R.C. In spite of Lancashire's unanimity, however, the delegates were swayed by the Londoners led by Hyndman, Quelch, Burrows, and Jack Jones and by the vociferous representatives of Stratford S.D.F. influenced by "impossibilist" doctrines.⁽¹²⁰⁾ The S.D.F. thus remained intransigent and independent and began to show signs of setting its face in even grimmer extremism when H.W. Lee, the party secretary, started to speak of triennial parliaments, a second ballot and a referendum as being reforms of the electoral system immediately required - the vocabulary of political sulkiness.⁽¹²¹⁾

Lancashire shared in the antipathy felt by other political groups for the S.D.F. which was brought about largely by London's attitude. The three parliamentary campaigns fought by socialist candidates in Lancashire in 1906 showed some signs of hope for the future,⁽¹²²⁾ but at the same time emphasised the S.D.F.'s isolation. The Social Democrat was still inclined to regret the L.R.C.'s reformism: "it is not, unfortunately, a socialist party."⁽¹²³⁾ Yet the L.R.C. had room for and need of a socialist left wing, and in rejecting this position the S.D.F. rejected working class unity.

4. The Growth of the I.L.P.

The development of the I.L.P. during this period presents a quite different picture. In 1900 its Lancashire branches were in as depressed a condition as those of the S.D.F. Membership stood at about 1,000 with less than a dozen active branches. As its successes in local elections the I.L.P. could point to only three Poor Law Guardians, seven borough auditors, nine

School Board representatives and nine town councillors:⁽¹²⁴⁾ a marginally greater achievement than that of the S.D.F. but not a striking political breakthrough. By 1905 there were 38 I.L.P. borough councillors in Lancashire,⁽¹²⁵⁾ a significant advance on the S.D.F.'s position although the two parties had about the same number of branches. How had this comparative leap forward come about?

It is certain that the I.L.P. gained ground without any appreciable geographical extension of its support. The most successful branches were those of long standing: Blackburn, Nelson and Manchester. The other more active branches, Littleborough, Liverpool, Ashton and Pendlebury - were also well established by the turn of the century. Moreover, like the S.D.F. the I.L.P. took most of its members from the working class. There was a small proportion of middle class professional people within its ranks, particularly women and notably Mrs. Pankhurst, the widow to R.M. Pankhurst who had been a leading figure in the Manchester I.L.P. during the 'nineties, and Ethel Annakin, who as a student in Liverpool had attended the services of the Baptist minister C. F. Aked: she became a teacher at Nelson in 1904, joined the I.L.P. and married Philip Snowden in 1905. But there were few signs by 1906 that the I.L.P. had been able to infiltrate the middle class suburbs of the larger towns. Neither was its influence greatly extended among trade unionists; the newer converts to labour representation in Lancashire had arrived at their decisions independently, not as a result of a socialist grip on their unions.

The clue to the understanding of I.L.P. expansion lies in the development of the older branches within the L.R.C. The Blackburn, Manchester and Nelson branches were pre-eminent in the years before the 1906 General Election; in all three towns the I.L.P. shared in the growth of a strong and united labour alliance.

In Blackburn the I.L.P. shared socialist representation in the Labour party with the S.D.F. This fact caused local I.L.P. members to doubt the policy of their own party and Charles Higham warned the annual conference in 1900 that indrawing away from the S.D.F. the I.L.P. was "not doing a wise thing."⁽¹²⁶⁾ The benefit of socialist co-operation lay in its presenting a strong counter weight to the influence of trade unionists, whose narrow aims, based on short term reforms, were prone to collapse when either attained or thwarted. Through their close connection with Snowden the Blackburn socialists strove towards greater perspective in their thinking. Snowden's concern with the contemporary fiscal controversy and his frequent writings on the subject in the Blackburn Labour Journal brought a more advanced note into the philosophy of the newspaper, which improved its quality and made the polemics and lampooning of former years seem rather crude. Deep analyses of the more serious issues of the day, including the free trade question, the problem of poverty and even the subtleties of foreign affairs, became a common contribution of the socialists to political debate; by 1904 the Labour Journal had increased its size, carried more articles and had established itself as a respected local paper.

The experience of joint labour action at Manchester had eased the Trades Council's path into the national L.R.C. to which it became affiliated in January, 1901.⁽¹²⁷⁾ Trades Council members, angered by the Taff Vale decision of 1903, took the lead in proposing that Labour candidates should be returned to Parliament for constituencies in Manchester and Salford, and also set about increasing the number of local Labour councillors, hastily dismissing overtures from the Liberal party on the question of forming a Liberal-Labour Progressive alliance.⁽¹²⁸⁾ A local L.R.C. was set up during 1903 for the specific purpose of fighting the forthcoming General Election in the labour interest; from the outset delegates of the I.L.P. were well represented on this body. Five branches of the Manchester and Salford I.L.P. attended the foundation conference along with delegates from S.D.F. groups in Salford and south west Manchester ^{and representatives} of 55 local trade societies;⁽¹²⁹⁾ J. E. Sutton, J. Johnstone and Joe Nuttall - all I.L.P. members - were elected to the principal offices of the L.R.C.⁽¹³⁰⁾

The party's programme was a nice balance of I.L.P. socialism and trade union reformism; it called for the usual schemes for the nationalisation of land, minerals and railways and appealed for free and efficient education from elementary school to university level. Most of the other demands concerned trade union reforms and consequently there was much prominence given to the need for a definition of the trade union laws, a more favourable workman's compensation law and an eight hours day. In addition references were made to issues which had at odd times been raised by the Liberal party; old age pensions, payments of M.P.'s and female suffrage. The other questions discussed were vague but tribute was paid to "housing reform" and, in the

economy, "national efficiency". The programme failed to deal sufficiently with international affairs, an omission which emphasised that the Labour party had not yet moved from being a pressure group for social reform to being a party equipped to govern the country. Only a token statement was made on foreign policy which suggested that armaments should be reduced and that the legislature should command the decision to make war.⁽¹³¹⁾ It was an eclectic programme and contrasted sharply with the criticisms of the local social democrats, who were dissatisfied with the provisions made for the inauguration of socialism by political means, based on a recognition of the class struggle.⁽¹³²⁾

Success blessed the Manchester and Salford L.R.C. from its inception. The interest in labour politics ensured a high trade union affiliation, and with it the funds necessary to prosecute efficient campaigning. By 1905 there were 16 Labour councillors in the two cities, six of them I.L.P. members, and their initial work was devoted to the organising of a Fair Contracts lobby.⁽¹³³⁾ Originally the most intensive organisation was based on the two parliamentary divisions, North East and South West, where Labour candidates were to be run; R. C. Hall, the L.R.C. secretary, co-ordinated the work of two large, divisional committees. Local electoral success, however, encouraged the development of a new constitution which came into operation during 1906. Representation on the L.R.C. was to be in strict ratio to membership; trade unions and I.L.P. branches were allowed two delegates for every 200 members although the Trades Council was allowed 5 delegates since it was the only local body affiliated directly to the national L.R.C.⁽¹³⁴⁾ Affiliation fees were worked out on the same basis;

trade unions and branches of the I.L.P. paid two pence each year for every members, whilst the Trades Council contributed £5 annually. In addition to the major constituent groups the L.R.C. extended membership to "all other Labour and Socialist organisations that are willing to work for the objects and conform to the rules of this Committee and the National Labour Party." The party had almost 14,000 affiliated members by July 1906 and efforts were being made to establish ward committees.⁽¹³⁵⁾ By 1911 there was a Labour group of 15 in the Manchester City Council; the L.R.C. already had the broad bottomed administration and support of a major opposition party.

The other centre of I.L.P. strength was the Clitheroe parliamentary division, and at Nelson in particular. Here the backbone of the Labour movement was the local Weavers' Association, which, although it had dissociated itself from labour representation between 1896 and 1901 as a result of internal quarrels, remained steadfastly progressive during the later 1890's supporting measures which called for "the socialising of the means of production, distribution and exchange" and continuing to press for the Eight Hours Day in the cotton trade.⁽¹³⁶⁾ In 1899 its delegates were instructed to vote for the proposal at the Trades Union Congress which brought about the formation of the national L.R.C. in 1900.⁽¹³⁷⁾ Members of Nelson Weavers were represented at the foundation conference of this body⁽¹³⁸⁾ and the following year the Weavers followed up their policy by appointing a special sub-committee to organise the campaigns of Labour candidates at the municipal elections.⁽¹³⁹⁾ Similar developments, influenced

by socialist opinion inside the trade unions, were evident at Colne. The Colne Weavers' Association had also been represented at the L.R.C. Conference of 1900 and Labour candidates had been successful in small numbers at the local elections in the town. A. B. Newall, the Colne Weavers' secretary, was one of these Labour councillors and an active supporter of the independent Labour principle; it was Newall who had suggested to Ramsay MacDonald in 1900 that the L.R.C. might seek cotton union support.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾

The decisive event which forged the formal alliance of labour groups at Nelson and Colne was the Clitheroe bye-election of August 1902.⁽¹⁴¹⁾ Relations between the trade unions and the I.L.P. were good, but as was seen, the S.D.F.'s more uncompromising posture prevented absolute harmony. Philip Snowden, who had done much of the early negotiating between the I.L.P. and the local Textile Trades Federation (representing the cotton unions of Nelson, Colne and Brierfield), persuaded the cotton unions to hold a meeting on labour representation in December 1901.⁽¹⁴²⁾ At this conference a further series of meetings were planned for discussions with representatives of the national L.R.C.⁽¹⁴³⁾ Only after these had been arranged would the Textile Trades Federation agree to consider the S.D.F. scheme for a socialist and labour candidate in Clitheroe.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ In March 1902, however, a Clitheroe Labour Representation Association was established⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ and the following July David Shackleton was chosen as its parliamentary candidate.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾

Shackleton's election illustrated the cleavage between the I.L.P. and the S.D.F. Shackleton had a strongly Liberal background and was not a committed socialist; there is no doubt that the I.L.P. would have preferred

to see Philip Snowden as the candidate but his nomination would have brought forward Liberal opposition, whereas that of the more moderate Shackleton was unopposed.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ Snowden conceded this point, telling A. B. Newall: "I think that Mr. Shackleton, as a trade union official and one so thoroughly acquainted with the staple trade and with the labour conditions of the district, has a far better claim and would make a more useful representative."⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Shackleton styled himself "a Labour candidate pure and simple"⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ and supported a reversal of the Taff Vale judgement, with an array of various social reforms thrown in for good measure.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ The local S.D.F., however, decided that his attitude was "partly satisfactory and partly unsatisfactory" and refused to support him.⁽¹⁵¹⁾

By not demurring at the choice of Shackleton the I.L.P.'s stock rose, especially after the successful outcome of the bye-election. In September 1902 the Nelson Weavers' Association agreed to join in the formation of a municipal L.R.C. in the town, thus ensuring the continuity of parliamentary co-operation at local level.⁽¹⁵²⁾ Moreover, the local Labour parties which developed in the Clitheroe division during the next few years displayed a markedly more independent character than that of their Member of Parliament. The Labour parties at Nelson and Colne were well advanced by 1906, when Nelson had achieved the distinction of having the first Labour controlled Town Council in Lancashire. How did this come about?

The primary source of strength lay in the creation of an efficient political machine. Parliamentary and municipal work was prosecuted by different organisations. The Textile Trades Federation became the basis of

the Clitheroe L.R.C., which concerned itself with parliamentary elections. The Association allowed individual membership at subscription rates not less than those paid by the members of its affiliated trade societies and this arrangement allowed individuals who were not trade unionists to be represented at conferences of the national L.R.C. The executive of the Clitheroe L.R.C. was elected from each of the different districts within the division, according to the number of voters, and these districts in turn elected their own committees for electoral work in the wards.⁽¹⁵³⁾ By the time of the 1906 General Election, therefore, Clitheroe had a Labour party built along the lines which were to become familiar for constituency Labour parties of the future. Its organising efficiency in the small industrial towns of Nelson, Colne, Brierfield and Padiham, where the Labour voters resided, was responsible for the signal victories of Labour candidates in the division during the decade before the First World War.

Municipal politics were the special concern of the L.R.C.'s set up in each individual town. Nelson may serve as the model for these. The L.R.C. was simply an organisation for the liaison of trade union and I.L.P. forces; the S.D.F. was not represented.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ The biggest group in the L.R.C. was the Weavers with six representatives, and whilst their members provided numbers for the movement the socialists provided a sound ideology and leading activists. As a result an independent spirit was maintained and the Nelson Labour party felt strong enough to

resist Liberal suggestions for co-operation.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ The Weavers' Association now felt able to disseminate independent Labour ideas to its members and full details of Labour party work were given at each quarterly meeting. A newspaper, the Nelson Workers' Guide, was established, and so successfully was it able to promote the Labour party's image that in 1904 the Weavers' Association amended its rules to include among its objects "the return of Labour Representatives on all governing bodies."⁽¹⁵⁶⁾

The progress of the Nelson Labour party was manifested in municipal elections. By 1905, with 15 councillors, Labour had a working majority in the Council; the following year a Labour Mayor was elected. This represented a considerable advance on the position at Colne, where the local Liberals, led by the redoubtable Sam Catlow, had made a spirited fightback, combining with other anti-Labour forces to prevent further progress.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ The same process had occurred at Nelson, though on a less cohesive basis, and consequently it failed to affect Labour growth; in fact the realignment was greeted with joy by the Workers' Guide, which commented:

"It would seem that municipal contests are not to be between Liberal and Conservative, but between Labour and anti-Labour, in other words, between the employer of labour and the labourer." ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾

Since approximately five sixths of the Nelson ratepayers were working class people it was clearly possible for the Labour party to tap the majority of electoral support provided it could maintain a balance in its policies.

This was achieved by combining an independent appeal to the working man with the practical continuation of moderate policies such as Fair Contracts clauses and the municipalisation of tramways and public baths.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ In 1905 the Labour party secured a popular success by reducing the gas rate.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ Many of the Liberals' fears about Labour councillors failed to materialise; they did not prove to be ignorant, impractical revolutionaries, nor particularly spendthrift legislators. In fact the Labour party's socialist philosophy was rather weak; the difference, it was claimed, lay in the fact that, whereas the Liberals had been champions of political freedom, they had done nothing to ensure working men "free use of land and the means whereby they may earn their bread."⁽¹⁶¹⁾ The Labour party, so the implication ran, would achieve this aim; but its success among working people came from its advances in political democracy - by implementing "a just Democratic principle" and giving the working class a majority of the voting power on the Nelson Council.

In the three towns analysed above the I.L.P. was able to maintain a vital influence in the Labour party by enlarging the scope of the party from that of a purely trade union group, and thus extending its political and intellectual appeal. But this type of Labour party was

far from being typical of the many labour groups which developed in Lancashire during the early years of the twentieth century. As a result, when the Labour breakthrough occurred in 1906, it was based on the largely sectarian appeal of political trades unionism.

5. Conclusion

In the years between 1895 and 1906 the Socialist groups in Lancashire had experienced varying fortunes. It is clear that those parties which had exhibited most willingness to join with trade unions in the creation of local labour alliances profited most from the setting up of the L.R.C. So it was that the I.L.P. became a vigorous element in at least three local parties and was able to provide them with a distinct character. On the other hand those few S.D.F. groups that might have followed this course found their exclusion from the L.R.C. a grave disadvantage in the task of gaining new members and winning more political influence. Thus, although the overall influence of the socialists in the Lancashire Labour movement just before 1906 was not very significant, at least the I.L.P. seemed to have found a fruitful role whilst the S.D.F. appeared to be more sectarian than ever.

Chapter 11

TRADE UNIONS AND THE LABOUR REVIVAL

The Labour Representation Committee of 1900 seemed an unlikely challenge to either of the established parties. Its local structure was weak and gave it the appearance of nothing more than a parliamentary pressure group based on a coalition of trade unionists and socialists. Its initial strength in Lancashire was negligible; there was no substantial labour movement with roots in the constituencies which the L.R.C. could direct towards independence. In truth, the strength of the region's working class lay in the trade unions, but only twelve of them had sent delegates to the L.R.C. foundation conference - a disappointing reflection of interest in independent labour representation. Yet during the next few years the position changed. Local L.R.C.'s were formed in many towns and became a basis for the future Labour party; a number of candidates were sponsored in the General Election of 1906, by which time Labour was beginning to make gains in local elections. This sudden upswing was caused primarily by the attitudes of trade unionists.

1. The Position in 1900

The changes of these years involved something more than the numerical increase of affiliated L.R.C. members. In 1900 the more active elements in Lancashire working class politics had been guided by socialists of the S.D.F. and I.L.P. Labour alliances drew heavily on their inspiration and on the support of trade union groups influenced by socialism, such as the Gas Workers at Blackburn or the miners at east Manchester. The extent of this was seen in the 1900 General Election, when no candidates

were put directly in the field by trade unions. In the years immediately following, however, this socialist direction was lost as many non-socialist trade unionists began to take up the question of independent Labour politics.

Of the original twelve Lancashire unions which had displayed an interest in the L.R.C.⁽¹⁾, many had clearly sent delegates out of curiosity since only four - the Dock Labourers, the British Labour Amalgamation, the Musicians and Colne Weavers - remained affiliated in the following year, when only eight Lancashire Societies were represented. The significant affiliations at this time came from unions with strong socialist connections; the Dock Labourers, for instance, whose militant I.L.P. secretary, Sexton, had supported the motion at the Trades Union Congress in 1899 which resulted in the formation of the L.R.C.; the British Labour Amalgamation was another example of a socialist "new" union which affiliated in 1900 through the continuing socialist influence in its ranks, the social democrat Chatterton being its delegate. On the other hand the Lancashire Miners were merely inquisitive; they had sent two delegates, Aspinwall and Thomas Greenall, to observe; but Greenall was surprised, and no doubt pleased, to find himself elected to the Committee with the largest number of votes.⁽²⁾ The subsequent decision of the Lancashire Miners not to affiliate was not only a disappointment for Greenall, who accordingly was obliged to withdraw as Vice-Chairman of the L.R.C.⁽³⁾, but presented a serious blow to the L.R.C.'s prospects in Lancashire. With the cotton unions the Miners held the key to Labour development in the region. Their indifference to the L.R.C. in 1900

seemed to suggest that they were unwilling to abandon their old industrial tactics of the 1890's for a new approach to politics. Yet during the next two years these two groups of unions came to recognise the need for concerted political action within the L.R.C. How did this change of heart come about?

2. Change in the Cotton and Mining Unions.

The movement of the cotton unions into the L.R.C. was the logical outcome of their political manoeuvres of 1895. Yet for a time after the General Election of that year the cotton unions had seemed temporarily to lose interest in cohesive political action. In 1896 the potentially powerful United Textile Factory Workers' Association was disbanded. When the decision was made to discontinue legislative work Mawdsley of the Spinners commented, by way of explanation:

" we have better laws and administration than any other section of workers and it is not likely that we shall be able to get any further for some time." (4)

But this answered nothing; in fact, it was far from the truth. There were still many questions of importance to be dealt with; for example, the Government was considering the possibilities of raising the half-time exemption, whilst the unions were negotiating for favourable terms in a new Truck Bill⁽⁵⁾. Both these questions were of some importance for the Weavers, though of less pressing significance for the Spinners. In consequence there developed between the Weavers and the other unions a difference over aims, particularly over the new Truck Bill,

whose proposals did nothing to prevent the exaction of fines from workers, a practice common in weaving sheds and which the Weavers' Amalgamation was seeking to have abolished. No support was forthcoming from Mawdsley and the Spinners and in their attempt to secure exemption from the provisions of the Truck Bill the Weavers found themselves isolated. It is more than likely that Mawdsley, a Conservative, was unwilling to back the Weavers and risk embarrassing the Government, especially since his own union had no material interests at stake.⁽⁶⁾

Such policy differences outline the basic industrial aims of the two unions at this stage: the Spinners had achieved their major objectives in legislative reforms and were now beginning to concentrate once more on industrial bargaining; on the other hand the Weavers still wanted to press for additional legislative safeguards in their trade, including amendments for the Factory Act, resistance to the pressures mounting up against half-time labour and checks on the "driving" of weavers.⁽⁷⁾ So it was that the Weavers' Amalgamation made most of the running in political work during the later 1890's.

Moreover, the tension between the Spinners and Weavers did not outlast the turn of the century. The unions began to experience fluctuating fortunes that contrasted sharply with their more steady progress in the early 'nineties, and served to point out the need for parliamentary as well as industrial action. The continuation of unilateral lobbying tactics brought the Weavers' Amalgamation the supplementary Cotton Cloth Factories Act of 1897, which guarded against excessive steaming in weaving sheds.⁽⁸⁾ In 1899 the U.T.F.W.A. was revived, partly because

of the need to secure amendments in the Factory Act and also in response to an Employers' Parliamentary Council which had been established to represent the political interests of the cotton masters.⁽⁹⁾ In the new Factory Act of 1901 the cotton workers managed to obtain a reduction in mill hours⁽¹⁰⁾ - the "twelve o'clock Saturday" - a provision opposed, incidentally, by most employers in the trade.⁽¹¹⁾ This helped to bring the unions together again, as did the position on the industrial front during these years. Although profit margins in the cotton industry were higher at this time than at any stage during the previous twenty five years the unions still had to threaten strike action to secure wage advances in 1899 and 1900.⁽¹²⁾ The Weavers, moreover, were still disgruntled at their failure to gain satisfaction on the "driving" question and feelings among the rank and file in the districts were running high.⁽¹³⁾ Discontent in the spinning trade was centred on the employers' slowness to discuss a re-negotiation of the 1893 Brooklands Agreement after a rash of "bad spinning" disputes.⁽¹⁴⁾ Industrial relations were not improved by the bad trade that hit Lancashire in 1901, causing depression until well into 1904 and short time working in the mills. For all these reasons, therefore, a feeling of uncertainty began to creep into the thoughts of the cotton unionists making them all the more receptive to new ideas and new methods of approach to their perennial problems.

The same was also true of the Lancashire Miners. Unlike the cotton workers, but in common with other districts of the Miners' Federation, they suffered reduced earnings when the boom brought on by the South African war ended with the coming of peace in 1902. Little progress was made with the evergreen question of an Eight Hour Day, whilst newer issues including workmen's compensation for injury, mines regulation and old age pensions were becoming prominent in legislative work. In 1901 the Conservative government introduced a tax of one shilling on every ton of exported coal thus bringing a storm of protest from the mining regions at the "reckless interference with the principles of free trade to which we owe our commercial supremacy."⁽¹⁵⁾ About this time, too, with problems mounting, the miners were beginning to display increased opposition to employers, especially over the question of old age pensions ⁽¹⁶⁾; the problem of nationalisation was also debated more frequently at miners' conferences.⁽¹⁷⁾

Among both cotton workers and miners, therefore, a series of vexatious issues had arisen of a kind which seemed to demand redress by parliamentary action. To be sure, neither of the political parties appeared to offer much to trade unionists in the way of social legislation - the Liberals because of their undoubted electoral failures and the Conservatives because of their unimpressive record in the field of reform. The L.R.C. might therefore have some attraction as an

alternative pressure group but, as we have seen, its attraction was not sufficiently strong to draw the Lancashire cotton unionists and the miners into its ranks in 1900. Industrial grievances were not in themselves sufficiently strong to cause a change of attitude.

By the end of the 1890's, however, a changed outlook on the part of certain pockets of opinion within the unions can be discerned. The Liberal leadership of the Lancashire Miners was beginning to pay closer attention to the question of Labour candidates; Sam Woods, who sat as Liberal-Labour member for Walthamstow from 1897 to 1900⁽¹⁸⁾, was also secretary of the Trades Union Congress and had given his lead in 1900 to labour representation by approaching J. R. MacDonald of the L.R.C. with the aim of "opening up communication with the Liberal whip"⁽¹⁹⁾ to bring out more labour candidates. In addition, there was a more advanced element in the Lancashire Miners' leadership. Although the Conservative Thomas Ashton was still Federation secretary some of the younger agents had acquired reputations as independent labourites and even socialists. Thomas Greenall was one of the most prominent; he sat as a socialist labour councillor at Pendlebury with I.L.P. support and his influence among the miners of that area had created a vigorous socialist pressure group at Pendlebury. It was the Pendlebury miners' branch which urged the Federation to affiliate to the L.R.C. in 1900⁽²⁰⁾, shortly after Greenall had returned from the foundation conference in February.

Although Pendlebury was supported by the miners of Bamfurlong, another district where the principle of independent labour representation had made great strides, the Federation as a whole rejected the idea⁽²¹⁾, possibly because Woods was in the process of attempting to retain his parliamentary seat at Walthamstow.⁽²²⁾ Nevertheless the socialists had served advanced notice of their intentions.

In the cotton unions important changes had also taken place in the leadership. No socialists were represented on the Legislative Council of the U.T.F.W.A. but by the turn of the century a younger group of radicals who were disposed to look favourably on the L.R.C. were coming into positions of influence. The rising star amongst them was David Shackleton who had been elected to the Legislative Council in 1894 at the age of 31; two years later he had become a Liberal borough councillor at Darwen, where he was also secretary of the local Weavers' Association. In 1902, still under forty, he accepted the nomination of the L.R.C. at Clitheroe and became Lancashire's first independent Labour M.P. Though by no means a socialist Shackleton nonetheless represented an advance on the political views of the veteran cotton union leaders - Mawdsley, Holmes, Mullin, Ashton and Crinion - largely because of his stand on the independent labour position. But despite the rise of younger men like Shackleton, Joseph Cross of Blackburn and J. W. Ogden of Heywood, the older leaders still spoke with a powerful voice and in 1900 they had viewed the L.R.C. with suspicion; Thomas Ashton of the Spinners had argued against the "impracticable character"⁽²³⁾ of the proposal at the 1899 Trades Union Congress to form an independent labour

group, and his attitude - that "not one trade unionist out of ten thousand" would take any notice of the L.R.C.⁽²⁴⁾ - was endorsed by the influential Cotton Factory Times.⁽²⁵⁾

Three years later the Textile Factory Workers' Association was in the L.R.C. This sudden change of course was in part brought about by the realisation that the old methods of piecemeal industrial reforms were seriously handicapped by a hostile House of Commons; the Cotton Factory Times was prepared to admit that progress was hindered by having no "direct representatives" to voice the opinions of the cotton workers on the floor of the House of Commons.⁽²⁶⁾ Yet, it is true, this inconvenience had been tolerated before and was not now the primary cause in pushing the cotton unions into the arms of the L.R.C. Two events of 1902, unrelated though equally powerful in their effect, probably proved more decisive in the change of attitude.

The first was the legal attack on the Weavers' Amalgamation. In 1900 the Weavers had look on with sympathy at the events which surrounded the Taff Vale dispute in South Wales involving the Railway Servants,⁽²⁷⁾ though they exhibited little feeling for other unions whose positions were being undermined by the law courts over questions of picketing.⁽²⁸⁾ Late in 1901, however, events took place nearer the centre of the Weavers' own territory; a Blackburn cotton firm obtained an injunction at the Liverpool Chancery Court against some weavers who had been on strike as a result of a "bad materials" dispute. The Blackburn Picketing Case, as it became known, was settled out of court but the Weavers' Amalgamation

was served with a fine of about £11,000 and some of its officials were also prosecuted for libel.⁽²⁹⁾ At this time, though the financial settlement of the Taff Vale case had not been made, the Cotton Factory Times began to speak with indignation of "Taff Vale Number Two"⁽³⁰⁾ and the Weavers were already asking for a reversal of the decision in order to protect their funds "against misuse", and to demand "no power in a trade dispute which is not less than the power an employer is always free to use against either a trade union or its members."⁽³¹⁾ From this point the weaving section of the cotton trade developed an earnest interest in a new Trade Disputes Bill; as a necessary correlative the Weavers' Amalgamation, meeting in January 1902, instructed its Central Committee to take immediate steps to secure the direct representation of Labour in Parliament.⁽³²⁾

Almost before the question could be taken up by the Legislative Council of the Textile Factory Workers' Association another important event occurred, which pointed the way towards the means by which the Weavers' demands might be met. In August 1902 David Shackleton became Labour member for Clitheroe. The timing of his election and the manner and ease in which it was accomplished, through the "sweet reasonableness" of the I.L.P.⁽³³⁾, could not have been more opportune. The Weavers' Amalgamation was particularly quick to respond to the situation and gave its Vice-President full support.⁽³⁴⁾ The Cotton Factory Times also saw his adoption as the remedy to the hostile "treatment of labour questions at the hands of Parliament, judge and municipal body" over the past few years;⁽³⁵⁾ the paper was also pleased to see that Shackleton retained

his essential character as a trade union official, though took a certain pride in noting that "he will not forget that he is the representative of the whole constituency."⁽³⁶⁾ Stimulated by the election and its prospects, the delegates to the 1902 U.T.F.W.A. conference, which was convened only a few days before Shackleton's victory, gave the question of labour representation very favourable consideration. The atmosphere was enlivened by the absence of the potentially obstructive Mawdsley; he had died the previous February and his long tradition of forthright, businesslike trade unionism, often a blunting edge to political adventures, passed away with him.⁽³⁷⁾

By the constitution of the U.T.F.W.A. a ballot of members had to be conducted before a final decision could be reached on labour representation; voting took place in November 1902 but already many union leaders were making their influence felt in favour of an affirmative vote. William Mullin of the Card room Amalgamation, who had previously kept well in the background on controversial issues such as this, now gave his weight to the advance; recalling the rivalries of 1896, he agreed:

"The question of being directly represented in the House of Commons by representatives appointed as candidates for parliamentary honours by the Textile Workers' Association, is one that our members will shortly be asked to vote upon. It is a matter that many other societies have under consideration, and is worthy of careful thought. As textile workers we are happily blessed, inasmuch as our trade is confined to a limited area, and when our efforts and votes are cast for candidates who will support our measures, we can wield an influence that tends to our benefit. If our

members decide to support the scheme of direct representation in Parliament then it will be necessary to remodel the Textile Workers' Association. There will have to be a closer union of the various branches of the Textile Workers. The interest of one section must be the interest of all. There will be no room for petty bickerings and jealousies: success to an object of this character can only be obtained by a determined unanimous effort being put forth and each branch entering with friendly rivalry to accomplish the best results." (38)

The ballot gave big majorities both for the principle of direct labour representation and for the proposal of a levy to finance candidates and elections.⁽³⁹⁾ By the beginning of 1903 plans had been laid to contest the seats of Bolton and Oldham with cotton union representatives. The L.R.C. was approached and later in the year the U.T.F.W.A. became an affiliate, with 103,000 members. Contributions to the L.R.C.'s Parliamentary Fund began in 1904. Henceforward the cotton unions staked their political efforts on the creation of a national labour party. Although early in 1902 the Cotton Factory Times had been thinking in terms of sectional representation by individual unions⁽⁴⁰⁾ it now began to see that "no single branch of Labour in any constituency is numerically strong enough of itself to elect a Member of Parliament;" it added: "The aim of the National Committee is to combine the whole of the Labour forces. This will add strength to candidates brought out under its auspices. It will also minimise the possibility of two Labour candidates opposing each other in any constituency."⁽⁴¹⁾ After years as an isolated pressure group the cotton unions had become aware of their role in a national movement.

The Lancashire Miners were not such an independent force as the cotton unionists for they were already committed to action within the M.F.G.B. and consequently could not take decisions without possibly affecting other mining unions. Ben Pickard, the M.F.G.B. President and a leading Liberal trade unionist, had sought to preserve the Liberal proclivities of the Miners by devising his own scheme for labour representation, in competition to the L.R.C. It was based on representation by trade unions, "each cognate trade in each borough" to participate. Pickard clearly disliked the idea of paying for other unions' candidates, and particularly for socialist candidates, through the L.R.C. In 1900 he had pleaded to an M.F.G.B. conference: "I should like to ask why we, as a Federation, should be called upon to join an association to find money, time or intellect to focus the weakness of other trade unionists to do what you are doing for yourselves and have done for the last fourteen years."⁽⁴²⁾ The M.F.G.B. Labour Fund Scheme, as Pickard's creation was called, was accepted in October 1901 by the Executive Committee of the Federation.⁽⁴³⁾

In some cases, however, Pickard's scheme proved as autocratic as anything the L.R.C. were offering. If miners' unions failed to pay the levy they lost their franchise. But more important for the Lancashire Miners was its attempt to propagate the existing Liberalism of the Federation's area by confining itself to reasonably "safe" mining seats. The Lancashire people, however, could not afford to associate too closely with radical partisans; the previous decade had taught them that union politics needed to be fairly independent to accommodate the differences of opinion among the Lancashire membership. Although they

had not affiliated to the L.R.C. in 1900 the Lancashire Miners exhibited more marked options for an independent political line in the next two years; they were disappointed by Woods' failure to be re-elected at Walthamstow and in 1901 proposed that he should become the Miners' candidate at Newton-le-Willows under the Labour Fund Scheme, though it was stressed that his position should be strictly independent, unconnected with any political party.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Moreover, Lancashire was determined to wring as much from the Labour Fund Scheme as possible; the miners disliked the idea, as Pickard had felt towards the L.R.C., of paying for other unions' candidates; more important, they liked their own representatives to occupy seats in Lancashire: "whilst on the whole the miners of Lancashire were pleased that Mr. Woods was in the House of Commons," said Thomas Glover of Woods' occupancy of the Walthamstow seat, " (they) never relished the fact the same as when he represented a mining constituency in his own county."⁽⁴⁵⁾ Berry Field branch of the Lancashire Miners therefore proposed that Thomas Glover should be a candidate in the Eccles Division. At this, Thomas Ashton, the secretary issued a warning:

"I am afraid we are moving too fast in Lancashire, we have already paid a 3d. levy from the Federation Funds, when the next levy will be called I cannot say at present. The scheme adopted by the M.F.G.B. is only just being sent out to the districts. It is not intended to put the scheme into operation until the next General Election, which is not likely to take place for many years I think we ought not to be too forward in adopting candidates, there is plenty of time; let the other districts in the M.F.G.B. have a little before we get ahead too far." ⁽⁴⁶⁾

But Ashton found few willing to heed his cautionary advice; the miners' agents, especially Greenall, Glover and Walsh, had been active in sounding opinion and in November 1902 they held a meeting at which it was recommended that the Lancashire Federation should contest three seats, with Thomas Ashton at Ince and Greenall at Radcliffe-cum-Farnworth, as well as the original scheme for Woods.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The proposals were well received, although there was some disagreement over the choice of candidates. The Park Lane branch wanted to replace Ashton, a Tory, with Stephen Walsh in the Ince division. Walsh had been elected agent in 1901 in succession to Thomas Aspinwall; he was an active politician who had been a radical in the early days, working on behalf of Liberal candidates in the coalfield and in 1892 supporting Sam Woods in his Ince campaign. During the 1890's he had been the secretary of Ashton in Makerfield Miners' branch and in 1901 won the agents' election with the help of socialist votes.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Some delegates to the conference of December 1902, which discussed these proposals, also felt that he should work on "strictly independent lines irrespective of any political party."⁽⁴⁹⁾

For his own personal political reasons Ashton declined his invitation to be a candidate, and was replaced on the list by Walsh.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Greenall then announced that he would prefer to contest Accrington, where he had been assured of more willing support by local trade unionists than he had been able to secure at Radcliffe.⁽⁵¹⁾ After these alterations it was decided that the Lancashire Miners' Federation should support four of its own candidates at the next General Election; Woods at Newton,

Glover at St. Helens, Greenall at Accrington and Walsh at Ince.⁽⁵²⁾

It then seemed a mere formality when Bamfurlong branch, led by the rising socialist Harry Twist, proposed that the Lancashire Miners join the L.R.C.; it was agreed ⁽⁵³⁾ and 37,000 members were affiliated in 1903, contributions to the Parliamentary Fund began the following year and the Lancashire candidates became the nominees of the L.R.C.

There was, however, an interesting sequel to this decision. When the Lancashire Federation joined the L.R.C. it was already subscribing to the M.F.G.B. parliamentary scheme. Ashton therefore approached MacDonald, the L.R.C. secretary, to secure exemption from the L.R.C. Parliamentary Fund for Lancashire. MacDonald, not wishing to lose Lancashire's support, replied vaguely, but eventually allowed Ashton to pay the ordinary affiliation fee of ten shillings for every 1,000 members, assuring him that "should it ever be necessary for us to tighten up our organisation a little it will be quite easy to come to some arrangement with societies affiliated to the M.F.G.B." In 1904, however, the L.R.C. conference made contributions to the Parliamentary Fund compulsory for all affiliates; the Lancashire Miners were told they would have to pay them. They did. Nonetheless they continued to receive their share of the M.F.G.B. scheme, which was being used to support blatant Liberal candidatures in other districts. Neither the L.R.C. nor the Lancashire Miners, with their insistence on absolute independence, nor the M.F.G.B., with its hostility towards the L.R.C., displayed the slightest misgivings over this situation, which served

to illustrate the rather hazy political colouring of the Lancashire candidates.⁽⁵⁴⁾

3. Local Labour Parties

With the incorporation of the Miners and Textile Workers in the L.R.C. the two strongest bases of Lancashire working class politics became committed to the Labour party principle. Labour politics in the region were intensified also by the interest displayed by other big trade unions with high Lancashire membership in political affairs, and in course of time the parliamentary candidates of these unions, the Steel Smelters, the Engineers, the Railway Servants and others, were directed to Lancashire towns.

Between 1903 and the 1906 General Election, therefore, the infrastructure of the Labour party in Lancashire was built. It must be remembered that many of the local parties established at this time were little more than management committees for trade union candidates, for by 1905 the labour revival had dwarfed the influence of socialists.⁽⁵⁵⁾ There were 19 local labour groups, not all of them affiliated to the L.R.C., making serious efforts to sponsor Labour candidates in parliamentary and municipal elections, and their character, form and organisation give a clear indication of the political groupings upon which the future Labour party in Lancashire was founded. They provide some clues to its ensuing successes and failures.

The Textile Factory Workers' Association established local committees in the double member constituencies of Oldham and Bolton. These were considered to be the most suitable places for cotton union

candidates⁽⁵⁶⁾ although both towns had sizeable groups of engineering workers whose co-operation would have to be sought. At Oldham the local labour movement had made few strides and the Trades Council's membership had dropped to about nine thousand at the turn of the century with the withdrawal of both the local Spinners and Card room unions.⁽⁵⁷⁾

J. R. Clynes continued as the Council's secretary; he had fought as a Labour candidate in three municipal contests by 1903 and had been defeated at each one.⁽⁵⁸⁾ In that year, however, the local cotton unions renounced their political neutrality following the decision of the U.T.F.W.A. and an agreement was reached for the first time since 1894 which secured the support of all the affiliated groups in the Trades Council for the candidature of Thomas Ashton, the secretary of the local Spinners.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Ashton, like many of the older cotton leaders, was a recent convert to labour representation; in 1899 he had denounced the idea vigorously but had come to believe that trade unions should extend their activities to Parliament: "recently he had noticed a coolness on the part of Members (of Parliament) to Lancashire affairs".⁽⁶⁰⁾ He promised to abide by the L.R.C. posture on independence and to ignore party politics by concentrating on Labour questions.⁽⁶¹⁾

The result was a fairly stagnant Labour group. Clynes, who was co-secretary of the L.R.C. tried to work the I.L.P. into the movement⁽⁶²⁾ but the local branch had been fairly inactive over previous years and was unable to add any vigour. Clynes himself was the most distinct influence for socialism among a company of trade unionists who were attempting merely to extend the principles of industrial bargaining into politics. No

progress was made in local elections. Doubts also began to be raised about Ashton's integrity as a Labour candidate; his previous inclinations had been towards Conservatism and he probably revolted inwardly at Labour's close association with the Liberal party. In 1905 he found an opportunity to sever his links with the Labour movement; the Oldham Spinners lost the services of their assistant secretary and additional union duties were thus placed upon Ashton, who renounced his candidature when the union refused to appoint a new assistant.⁽⁶³⁾ The episode had the appearance of a contrived plot, for the Spinners had never been the leading advocates of Labour representation and possibly feared the loss of Ashton to Westminster. The Legislative Council of the U.T.F.W.A. attempted to smooth matters over by inviting James Crinion, the president of the Cardroom Amalgamation, to stand in Ashton's place; but Crinion, who had appeared on many Labour platforms, surprisingly declined to take up the fight, claiming that there was "no hope of success" and that a contest would be a "waste of money".⁽⁶⁴⁾ The Trades Council refused to accept these judgements and would have been willing to sponsor Clynes had he not already accepted the L.R.C. nomination at North East Manchester, a move which seemed to weaken the organising drive at Oldham. Although several attempts were made to find a replacement candidate nobody came forward and the Labour group collapsed on the eve of the General Election.⁽⁶⁵⁾

The Labour party at Bolton achieved greater unity among its personnel but its political standpoint was equally narrow. Since its origins in the late 1880's the Bolton labour movement had developed strong affinities with Liberalism. Robert Tootill, a veteran of the Iron Strike agitation in 1887 and a leading spirit in local "new" unionism, sat as a Liberal Labour councillor from 1890 onwards; in 1896 he succeeded Fielding as the Trades Council Secretary, claiming to uphold in it an "untarnished, non-political character".⁽⁶⁶⁾ At the turn of the century the Council began to press for more Labour representation in the town with Tootill supporting the move, denouncing the policies of the established parties as "distinctly injurious to the best interests of this community" and saying that he would have done more himself for the working people had he been "freer from the Liberal trammels", which had "kept him back".⁽⁶⁷⁾ In fact Tootill had been a loyal Progressive supporter but for his attacks upon the party found himself opposed by Liberal candidates in the 1902 municipal elections. In that year the Trades Council decided to form its own Labour group and supported four candidates, most of them "strongly radical".⁽⁶⁸⁾ The movement received encouraging support from two prominent local unions, the Spinners and the Carters and Lorrymen, both of which had become affiliated to the L.R.C. in 1902 when the Trades Council also joined. By 1905 there were eight councillors in the Labour group, most of the successes having occurred in wards which had previously exhibited Tory sympathies.

There was little political variety in the group; the S.D.F. was no longer active in Bolton, whilst the I.L.P. had deteriorated since 1895. Consequently there was no hope of drawing in socialist militants to build up an active, individual membership. Liberal Labour figures dominated the group; besides Tootill, W. T. Wilson was one of the most influential; he was a carpenter who became Chairman in 1897 of his national union, the Carpenters and Joiners Amalgamation, and helped to establish a federation among the building trades of Bolton.⁽⁶⁹⁾ Wilson's policies - costprice gas, public baths and improved tramway services⁽⁷⁰⁾ - offered nothing not matched by the Liberals. The choice of an L.R.C. Parliamentary candidate emphasised the drabness of Bolton's political colouring; the cotton workers chose from the local secretaries of their three main unions and eventually nominated A. H. Gill of the Spinners. Gill had held his position since 1896 and had quickly made a mark as an efficient officer; he mostly steered clear of party politics but was a Bolton Town councillor and J.P. by 1900 and it was his local reputation upon which relied as a parliamentary candidate in 1906.⁽⁷¹⁾ By the end of 1905, however, the prospects for Labour success seemed remote. Good polls had been expected in the municipal elections of that year but the defeat of three Labour candidates, one of them in the important working class Great Lever Ward, was an ominous sign for the General Election.⁽⁷²⁾

In the mining district four Labour parties had been set up to further the Miners' Federation scheme. Two of these, at St. Helens and Ince, were straightforward trade union groups. St. Helens possessed greater variety since it was based on the local trades council, which encompassed, besides miners, workers in the glass, chemical and bottle making trades. The miners nonetheless occupied the driving seat and secured the nomination of Thomas Glover as L.R.C. candidate.⁽⁷³⁾ No labour representative had been elected to the St. Helens Town Council in recent years but in 1904 two were successful and the following year a further three gains were made.⁽⁷⁴⁾ In 1906 Glover was able to go to the polls with an efficient organisation and no problems of Liberal opposition.⁽⁷⁵⁾ The Ince Labour Registration Association was merely a branch of the Lancashire Miners, showing none of the political strength manifested by the far more vigorous divisional Labour party at Clitheroe. It was established in November 1903 to handle Stephen Walsh's candidature, concerning itself with organisational details rather than policy. Posters and pamphlets were circulated and public meetings held at which radical trade union leaders spoke. In December 1905 William Shaw, the agent, reported that "organisation and Register were in a good condition". The parliamentary campaign was managed efficiently but since the Labour candidate in this division simply relied upon loyalty to the Miners' Federation from the working class voters, there was in no sense a "Labour party spirit"; until after the First World War the miners' union remained for practical purposes the Labour party.⁽⁷⁶⁾

The two other Labour movements, at Accrington and Newton-le-Willows, had far more interesting histories. When Thomas Greenall had been originally designated Miners' candidate for Accrington in May 1903 the prospects for Labour success in the constituency had looked quite good. Greenall had been promised the support of the local miners, whose ranks had been infiltrated by a small but active group of social democrats which had assisted John Hemsall in the parliamentary campaign of 1900. Greenall himself was a socialist and very acceptable to the Accrington miners; their strength in the division was much less than that of the miners around Wigan - certainly less than 10 per cent⁽⁷⁷⁾ - but other local trades began to look favourably on the Labour candidate after two leading cotton union officials, Wilkinson of the Weavers and Thomas Ashton, had visited Accrington to speak on Greenall's behalf.⁽⁷⁸⁾ He soon showed himself to be a sound independent, promising to uphold free trade if returned, and to work for social reform through "an entirely independent Labour party in the House of Commons".⁽⁷⁹⁾ During 1903 the local Trades Council became affiliated to the national L.R.C. which soon gave Greenall its official approval.⁽⁸⁰⁾

The campaign was under way by the first half of 1904 but trouble began to arise through the opposition of the local Liberals. Accrington, with its basically non-conformist character, was a fairly safe Liberal seat which Sir J.F. Leese, a Wesleyan and veteran political fighter had won comfortably in 1900; during the next couple of years, however, Leese experienced acute financial difficulties which almost led him to resign his seat though he eventually agreed to stay on until the next General Election when he would stand down at Accrington in favour of a

new Liberal candidate. In November 1902 the Accrington Liberal Association had reluctantly nominated a local man, Franklin Thomasson, to succeed Leese at the next Parliamentary election.⁽⁸¹⁾ The appearance of Greenall therefore complicated matters. Although secret negotiations were being carried out at this time between Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal Chief Whip and J. R. MacDonald of the L.R.C. to prevent clashes between Liberal and Labour candidates in the same constituency,⁽⁸²⁾ Gladstone had made it clear that he was unable to secure the removal of a Liberal candidate if a local association was determined to support one.⁽⁸³⁾ He could only bring his moral authority to bear on local leaders but at Accrington this was insufficient to remove Thomasson; Gladstone therefore turned to MacDonald to secure the removal of Greenall.

Greenall considered his candidature as a matter of principle among the miners; since many of them were Tories, 70 per cent. of them he claimed, he thought it was important to oppose a Liberal candidate and thereby make a display of independence when it looked as though the other Miners' candidates would be fighting only Conservatives. MacDonald's early attempts to remove Greenall were directed at finding the candidate another constituency, but failed. "He has seen Greenall and Greenall's friends", recorded Gladstone. "He has done his best to persuade Greenall to take South Salford, but G. is obstinate and nothing will move him from Accrington".⁽⁸⁴⁾ At this time the Accrington Labour people had sensed that something was afoot and MacDonald was obliged to make a formal, though false, denial of his manoeuvres;⁽⁸⁵⁾ during the winter of 1903-4, however, MacDonald used David Shackleton to keep up the pressure;

Shackleton, as well as being Lancashire's only Labour M.P. at this time, was also Chairman of the L.R.C., of which Greenall himself was an elected member, and enjoyed great popular esteem; he refused to support Greenall's political meetings, a move backed by the L.R.C.⁽⁸⁶⁾, and in April 1904 told Gladstone that if Thomasson's candidature was dropped and Leese remained Greenall might be willing to stand down.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Arthur Henderson and John Hodge, who had been involved in a Labour campaign at Preston in May 1903⁽⁸⁸⁾, were then sent by the L.R.C. to reason with Greenall about moving to another constituency.⁽⁸⁹⁾

It was only in the autumn of 1904, however, that the Labour candidate began to weaken. The situation changed drastically with the promise by Leese to stay on as Liberal candidate and the subsequent withdrawal of Thomasson. Clearly Greenall considered Leese to be a far tougher opponent for he estimated that it would cost an extra £1000 to fight him, admitting that even this expenditure might not guarantee success.⁽⁹⁰⁾ The ultimate decision to withdraw from the Accrington contest nonetheless lay with the conference of the Lancashire Miners' Federation and Greenall put his views before a representative meeting at Manchester in November 1904; he was attacked by the Accrington Miners who agreed that the chances of success had been decreased but not so much by the intervention of Leese as by Greenall's own timidity and tergiversation; he was accused by delegates from Great Harwood, Town Bent and Rishton of having lost interest.⁽⁹¹⁾ At the Miners' conference in Wigan the following month Henderson and Hodge, sent by the L.R.C.⁽⁹²⁾, were allowed to state their reasons why Greenall should withdraw from Accrington; when they said he should go to Newton-le-Willows to replace J. A. Seddon⁽⁹³⁾ the Accrington delegates shouted their

denunciation of these suggestions which, they claimed, smacked of double-dealing.⁽⁹⁴⁾ The conference therefore decided to appoint a Committee to investigate the entire affair.⁽⁹⁵⁾

The Report of the Committee of Enquiry, which included the socialists Harry Twist and J. E. Sutton, concentrated on two main issues; it declared that Greenall had no reasonable grounds for believing his chances to have been reduced by the intervention of Leese, suggesting that he had acted precipitately upon unreliable information. On the other hand the Report's examination of the L.R.C.'s position in the affair concluded that there was no political dodge since evidence for this was totally lacking. Greenall, therefore, was made to bear the blame:

"..... he has not displayed that energy and courage in his candidature which he ought to have done; he has been too apprehensive of defeat and has allowed himself to be too easily and seriously influenced by people's capricious opinions".⁽⁹⁶⁾

Whereat the Miners voted to drop the Accrington candidature⁽⁹⁷⁾ and Greenall retired from the political race altogether.

It was an ironic end to Greenall's efforts for the Committee of Enquiry had been completely unable to fathom the L.R.C.'s political pressure, though Thomas Ashton, the Miners' secretary, rightly claimed that the L.R.C. had been treated too leniently⁽⁹⁸⁾ and must have scorned, as a Tory, the extent to which it was prepared to co-operate with the Liberal party. This was not an end to the Labour movement in Accrington, however; the Trades Council was determined to carry on with its schemes

for a Labour candidate and adopted Dan Irving of the S.D.F. The extent of social democratic influence among the local workers was seen in 1905 when four socialist labour candidates were elected to the Town Council⁽⁹⁹⁾ and Irving agreed to stand by a "Socialist Labour" platform. His campaign was seriously weakened when the local Weavers, Railway Servants and Miners, the last named possibly requiring a miner to replace Greenall, refused to co-operate with the S.D.F.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ whose efforts had not been supported by the national L.R.C.⁽¹⁰¹⁾

The Lancashire Miners also lost a candidate at Newton-le-Willows; It had been intended to promote Sam Woods at this division but a lingering illness, which prevented him from carrying out his union duties, forced Woods to retire from politics in the autumn of 1903.⁽¹⁰²⁾ The division became vacant since there was no Liberal candidate.⁽¹⁰³⁾ The Conservative nominee, however, was Colonel Pilkington, a representative of the Pilkington glass works and an arch enemy of trade unionism, whom the local miners led by Harry Twist of Bamfurlong were very keen to oppose. In December 1903 Twist approached the Lancashire Miners with proposals for an L.R.C. candidate. MacDonald had already been in touch with Thomas Ashton on the same subject⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ though nothing was resolved until the spring of 1904 when a Newton L.R.C. had been established by the Earlestown Trades Council; Twist and Speakman, the Trades Council secretary, then appeared before the Lancashire Miners' conference to appeal for help. Speakman in particular painting a glowing picture of Labour prospects in the division⁽¹⁰⁵⁾. The conference was generally sympathetic but when Ashton applied to the M.F.G.B. for money from the Labour Fund Scheme he was told that Lancashire

had already received its full quota since there were at this time three candidates in the field.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Moreover under this scheme any candidate would have had to be a miner. The issue was resolved by the Newton L.R.C. itself, which elected James Seddon of the Shop Assistants as its candidate and wrote to the L.R.C. for support; the national body agreed to the scheme so long as Seddon promised to sign the constitution and have his name submitted by the affiliated Earlestown Trades Council.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

The problem remaining was to find a sponsor for Seddon. The Miners thought that the Shop Assistants union should pay his expenses,⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ but it was a small organisation and had not even listed Seddon among its parliamentary candidates at this stage; moreover Seddon had lost his own job and was in poor health, seeming to be on the verge of renouncing his candidature;⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ in April 1905 the Lancashire Miners, despite ardent pleas from its members at Lea Green and Old Boston, refused to grant Seddon £200 for his campaign⁽¹¹⁰⁾ and though it was promised after Greenall's withdrawal from Accrington that a fresh approach would be made to the M.F.G.B. nothing had been solved in this quarter on the eve of the 1906 General Election.⁽¹¹¹⁾

Seddon was a local man and a good candidate. He was born at Prescott, near St. Helens, in 1868 and had become a prominent trade unionist in the St. Helens district during the 1890's when he led the Early Closing movement among the shopworkers. By 1902 he was the national president of his union and also an official of the St. Helens

Trades Council. He was active in the I.L.P. and a keen member of the Congregationalists, having helped to organise a local group of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement.⁽¹¹²⁾ His supporters in the Newton division were loathe to see Seddon stand down through lack of funds. During the summer of 1905 the local miners' branches organised a collection and issued circulars to publicise Seddon's plight; £500 was raised for the election campaign with the help of the Shop Assistants', who made a contribution.⁽¹¹³⁾ This was nonetheless insufficient to maintain Seddon as an M.P. if he was elected and it was fortunate that the Lancashire Miners were able to give £100 to him after the election for this purpose.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ The narrow margin of Seddon's victory in 1906 reflected the Labour movement's money shortage in this division and its complete reliance on the efforts of the 4,500 miners.

A small Labour party also sprang up in the main mining centre of Wigan. The Lancashire Miners had renounced their political claims in this town after the defeat of Thomas Aspinwall in 1895 and although the mining vote was about half the electorate⁽¹¹⁵⁾ there was little chance of a strong Labour candidate being sponsored by another trade union. A small band of social democrats operated in local elections but were too insubstantial to aim at parliamentary contests; before 1906 only one Labour councillor opposed the established parties, Thorley Smith, a stonemason. Smith's political ambitions were to campaign for women's suffrage on behalf of all the female Trade Unionists who paid subscriptions but could take little part in union politics. He formed a small group with some trade union support and financed chiefly by

the Women's Political League, becoming a Labour candidate in the General Election of 1906.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ But it was clear that without the active participation of the miners' unions or the L.R.C. no Labour party would be able to flourish.

Trade union candidates were also sponsored in six other Lancashire towns; the movements which were organised to manage their campaigns differed from those already described only insofar as there was a more distinct unity of purpose between local and national groups. The cotton and mining unions, once decided upon a course of independent Labour action, merely selected their candidates and placed them in a constituency where their local membership could supply a strong body of electoral support. It was a domestic process: politics in one's own backyard. On the other hand, groups of workers with no such powerful organisation in the region were forced to adopt a different approach; united in a trades council they appealed to the national L.R.C. for assistance and were sometimes given a candidate from among the lists of its affiliated trade unions. This was the pattern which MacDonald hoped the L.R.C. could direct, the collecting of detailed information about local needs, the building up of a central treasury of candidates and their dispersal to the localities.⁽¹¹⁷⁾

Four of the groups which developed in this way between 1903 and 1905 went on to promote successful trade union candidates in 1906. All had strong radical connections. A meeting of trade unionists took

place at Stockport in March 1903 under the auspicious of the Trades Council, which had secured the election of two candidates to the Borough Council in that year.⁽¹¹⁸⁾ G. J. Wardle of the Railway Servants was assigned as candidate for the L.R.C. and adopted by the local trades in May.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ By 1905 the Labour agent, Fred Plant, had built up a sturdy local party which possessed a Women's League and a Labour Church.⁽¹²⁰⁾ An L.R.C. was established at Barrow in May 1903 on the initiative of the local Painters and Decorators, a militant union that had been responsible for the town's first Labour councillor in 1892⁽¹²¹⁾, and the Railway Servants.⁽¹²²⁾ The Trades Council, with over 5,000 members, formed the basis of the L.R.C. to which the local I.L.P. was affiliated. In August 1903 a Barrow member was elected to the national Executive Committee of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, an event which no doubt assisted the adoption of Charles Duncan, a former member of the Engineers and since 1900 secretary of the Workers' Union, as parliamentary candidate.⁽¹²³⁾ The Barrow party immediately set about building up its strength by fighting municipal elections with a programme combining trade unionist and socialist aims that included demands for a minimum wage in corporation departments, public baths and the municipalisation of tramways.⁽¹²⁴⁾ Four candidates in the 1904 Council elections were defeated but the L.R.C. had by this time secured a quick success by winning six seats on the Board of Poor Law Guardians⁽¹²⁵⁾ and by 1905 had established a reliable following of Labour supporters on Walney Island.⁽¹²⁶⁾ In May 1903 the trade unionists

of Gorton persuaded in a similar manner the Steel Smelters' union to sponsor its national secretary John Hodge as L.R.C. candidate in the division.⁽¹²⁷⁾ The fourth party in this group, that of Westthoughton, was not formed until 1905. There was no political Labour movement in the division although the Horwich Trades Council had been discussing for some time the question of Labour representation; early in 1905 it was decided to approach the Bolton L.R.C. for advice and Robert Tootill visited Horwich shortly afterwards to lend his support. Tootill thought Westthoughton, with its variety of trades and small compact groups of workers, offered good prospects for a Labour candidate, who would be able to rely on the support of the local miners, spinners and bricklayers' unions. W. T. Wilson of Bolton was asked to stand for the L.R.C. subject to the approval of the Carpenters and Joiners whose designated parliamentary candidate he was. This was secured and Wilson, a straightforward radical trade union man, went ahead with the creation of an independent labour organisation to combat the Conservative landowner Lord Stanley.⁽¹²⁸⁾

The two remaining Labour parties were more curious developments. Whereas the trade unions involved at Stockport, Barrow, Gorton and Westthoughton all combined to support prominent radicals of former days and thus emphasised their own political colouring, the workers at Preston and Liverpool had been formerly among the most firm Conservatives. The religious divisions at Preston had made the seat practically hopeless for the Liberals and since about 1892 the main opposition in

parliamentary elections had come from the I.L.P. which undoubtedly drew upon support from the radical fringe.⁽¹²⁹⁾ After the cotton unions' affiliation to the L.R.C. the position in Preston changed substantially; the local trade unionists were prepared to consider an independent position and as a result of interaction with the I.L.P. a meeting took place on March 30th 1903 with Woolley, the Weavers' president, in the chair. Delegates of the Trades Council, cotton unions and I.L.P. were present and the decision was taken to sponsor a Labour candidate at the next General Election.⁽¹³⁰⁾ Hardly had the L.R.C. been constituted when the senior member for Preston, R. W. Hanbury, died on April 27th, his demise causing a bye-election to be held in little over a fortnight's time. The Preston Labour party had not adopted a candidate but upon learning of the bye-election quickly intimated to J. R. MacDonald that John Hodge of the Steel Smelters would, if available, be its choice. MacDonald had no option but to respect the local party's wishes although the Textile Factory Workers had offered to sponsor A. H. Cottam of the Clitheroe Weavers, a well known trade union official who had for many years served the Blackburn Weavers. Cottam was also a Catholic and might reasonably have been expected to suit the conditions at Preston ideally.⁽¹³¹⁾ Yet Hodge was the candidate chosen, much to the dismay of the Cotton Factory Times, which was pro-Cottam.⁽¹³²⁾

Hodge, Chairman of the L.R.C. in 1903, was prominent as a trade unionist both locally and nationally; he administered his union from Manchester, where during the 1890's he had been a staunch Liberal, Chairman of the Cheetham Liberal Association and one of the party's city councillors. He became dissatisfied with Liberal social policy, his grievances increasing until in 1900, though by no means a socialist, he moved wholeheartedly into the independent labour position, fighting the parliamentary contest at Gower in that year against an official Liberal.⁽¹³³⁾ Hodge was also a strict Nonconformist and temperance advocate⁽¹³⁴⁾ and therefore hoped to draw on the votes of Liberal workingmen, especially since Preston was the paternal home of the temperance movement. But the most decisive event in his campaign there was the support he received from James Billington, secretary of the Preston Spinners and a lifelong Tory.⁽¹³⁵⁾ It was in order to rally the electoral support of working class Tories that Hodge made his campaign appear as completely as possible a battle between capital and labour, eschewing in the process any overt socialist or Liberal alliances. This posture was facilitated by the position of his Conservative opponent John Kerr,⁽¹³⁶⁾ a representative of the important, rapidly expanding local engineering works of Dick, Kerr and Company. Hodge proposed a programme which emphasised social and trade union reform and a local veto on the sale of alcohol; it was not an outstandingly radical manifesto but Hodge displayed a willingness to compromise by making favourable noises to the Catholics on the Coronation Oath question.

By directing his speeches to large assemblies of trade unionists he made sure that his message reached the proper ears.⁽¹³⁷⁾

The Labour campaign was severely hindered through its hastily improvised nature since the Mayor of Preston had allowed only five working days before the poll, a very short period which made a Conservative victory almost certain. Hodge used the time in working with Arthur Henderson, his agent, and MacDonald, who had rushed to Preston, in composing the broad organisational outlines of the campaign. Because of the limited time available MacDonald and Henderson produced a poster which had been used by Will Crooks, the L.R.C. victor at Woolwich earlier in the year, with only slight amendments for Preston.⁽¹³⁸⁾ Hodge admitted that in all respects his organisation was weak⁽¹³⁹⁾ whilst he was also affected by the local Liberal party's announcement of moral support for the Labour candidate.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ Hodge's performance, however, was surprisingly good⁽¹⁴¹⁾ - "a happy augury of what may be done even in places like Preston with active education work and good organisation."⁽¹⁴²⁾

In the years between 1903 and 1906 the Labour party improved its electoral machinery in Preston and eventually adopted J. T. MacPherson, also of the Steel Smelters, to fight in 1906.⁽¹⁴³⁾ 1903 had shown that a Labour platform might be more successful in winning working men's votes than Liberalism but the class issue needed to be constantly cultivated among the electorate if Conservatism was to be eclipsed.

The Liverpool labour movement had developed slowly during the last dozen years of the nineteenth century mainly because internal disputes prevented the creation of a united front. In the late 1880's the radical trade unionists, led by William Matkin of the Joiners,

encountered serious obstacles in persuading the Trades Council to endorse their political ambitions and no sooner had they achieved some success around 1890 than the socialist new unionists began to raise the question of independent labour representation. This proved a far more popular cause and with the encouragement of the local I.L.P. a Labour Representation Committee was established in 1894 to run Labour candidates at local and parliamentary elections.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ In the City Council elections of 1895, however, all the Labour and socialist candidates were disastrously defeated⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ and the following year saw the Trades Council's withdrawal from the labour alliance after a narrow majority had been obtained in a vote of delegates;⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ the move was undoubtedly assisted by the secession during 1894-95 from the Trades Council of the Dock Labourers under Sexton; they had been the Council's strongest body of support and the leading advocates of independent labour politics, their absence thus depriving the Trades Council of a militant core which might have succeeded in preserving a unifying balance between the socialist I.L.P. and the trade union right wing.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾

During the later 1890's the Trades Council continued to show an interest in labour representation, stimulated by the increase of union membership on Merseyside and by the hostility of the City Council towards labour pressure for Fair Contracts clauses. In 1898 the City Council proved particularly obstructive over a request from the Trades Council to hold a jubilee meeting in a public park; the refusal to sanction this appeal led to an immediate demand in the Trades Council for labour representation.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ At the same time trades unionism in the city was

arming itself for independence by taking steps to secure control of the Liverpool Labour Chronicle, formerly directed by the Fabians and I.L.P., as a trade unionist paper.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ But it was not until 1902 that the Trades Council was successful in sending a representative to a public body, when a candidate was elected to the Bootle Town Council.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ This event proved the turning point in a marked swing back to the labour alliance of the mid 'nineties; in the background was the important effects of high unemployment in the Merseyside port industries after the South African War, a situation from which Chamberlain's tariff reform proposals seemed to offer no respite. "When Capitalism becomes aggressive", remarked the Trades Council Secretary in 1903, "the weapon of Labour's defence should be political action."⁽¹⁵¹⁾ In common with other Lancashire towns Liverpool was thus impelled towards the L.R.C. on the tide of a Labour revival; in May 1903 a conference of trade unionists took place.⁽¹⁵²⁾

The following month a Liverpool L.R.C. was organised at a meeting in the offices of the Typographical Association; most of the delegates who attended were also members of the Trades Council but in October the L.R.C.'s independent status was asserted, with its own committees, funds and affiliates. Dues had been collected from members throughout the summer and by the Autumn £125 was available for fighting elections with 27 societies representing 10,000 workers committed to support the independent Labour principle.⁽¹⁵³⁾ Towards the end of the year attention was turned to the problem of a Labour candidate for Parliament. The Ways and Means Committee of the Liverpool L.R.C. decided to ask

James Conley, an organiser of the Boilermakers' society, to contest the Kirkdale division.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ The Boilermakers were willing to support this plan although when D.C. Cumming, the union's secretary, visited Liverpool in November he explained that some local boilermakers in Kirkdale were opposed to the scheme, which they considered a "waste of money" and likely to split the union politically.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Conley himself was undeterred by these objectors and pressed on; he was of Irish descent, a man who had made his way to national prominence by trade union work; Conley's political views were very narrow, owing nothing to socialism and he was typical of the union leaders who wanted to extend industrial bargaining into politics.

In municipal politics the L.R.C. moved towards a rapprochement with the socialist societies, supporting the veteran Sam Reeves of the I.L.P. in 1903⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ and discussing with the I.L.P. over campaign tactics.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ In October 1904, however, the L.R.C., hoping to build up financial resources, decided not to contest local elections before the Kirkdale parliamentary contest.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ The decision inevitably robbed the I.L.P. of much support and caused a needless variance of opinion, leading the I.L.P. to convene in 1905 a Joint Socialist Committee with the S.D.F. to promote municipal candidatures. Although the L.R.C. reversed its policy in September 1905 in time to support Sexton of the Dockers and Ratcliffe of the Musicians at the City Council elections⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ both candidates remained independent of the I.L.P. nominee, J.W.T. Morrissey, who was elected with Sexton. This comparative success prompted the L.R.C. to adopt Sexton as a second candidate at West Toxteth⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ in 1905, a decision which undoubtedly taxed resources. Popular enthusiasm might have carried Conley and Sexton through in any town but Liverpool where

Labour successes would only come through painstaking constituency work; the L.R.C. had not progressed to this stage during the first three years of its existence mainly because its co-operation with socialist allies, essential to provide militant propagandists, was less than complete.

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The contrast between the parties described above and those of Manchester, Blackburn and Nelson illustrates the importance which socialist influence was able to play in creating a sound party organisation. Trade union parties pure and simple were unable to develop the same vitality of purpose and too often had to rely on specific issues to unite the trade union vote. They possessed no far sighted political ideal.

A third type of labour movement, that which failed to produce united action between local trade union and socialist wings, had developed at Rochdale and Burnley. The Rochdale movement was a continuity of the socialist unity policy which had been evident during the late nineties. S. G. Hobson, the socialist parliamentary candidate, refused to countenance an alliance with non-socialist Labour groups, an attitude which simply served to prevent growth.⁽¹⁶¹⁾

Burnley, a rapidly expanding weaving centre, was the more important example of this type of situation. The S.D.F. continued as a vigorous

party in the town, drawing support from among the local Weavers' society and the miners branches, and adopting a moderate policy under the inspiration of Dan Irving. The Burnley S.D.F. looked favourably upon the Labour Alliance principle and opposed the decision of its Federation to stay outside the L.R.C. After 1901, however, it became impossible for the S.D.F. to co-operate with the L.R.C. at parliamentary level and the local branch went ahead with its own scheme to sponsor Hyndman as social democratic candidate for Burnley. It seemed for a while that Burnley might achieve the distinction of creating a socialist Labour party outside the L.R.C. network but in September 1903 these prospects were dimmed when the Burnley Liberal Association nominated the Liberal Labour man, Fred Maddison, as its parliamentary candidate.⁽¹⁶²⁾ Maddison provided a rallying point for the radical trade unionists and this polarisation in the politics of Burnley hardened in 1905 when the S.D.F. conference rejected Burnley's proposal that the Federation should rejoin the L.R.C. Thus, although the Trades Council and the Burnley Weavers became affiliated to the L.R.C. during 1903 at the same time as many other groups in the cotton towns, they had little ground in which to manoeuvre, no local branch was formed and no L.R.C. candidate put forward.

In local affairs the picture was different. Although the S.D.F. had some influence within the Trades Council the union leadership was mostly of a Liberal Labour connection with David Holmes and Fred Thomas

of the Weavers, strong supporters of a progressive radical alliance against the socialists, representing the Trades Council in the Town Hall.⁽¹⁶³⁾ Nonetheless the Trades Council had adopted an advanced municipal programme in 1902, similar to that of the labour parties at Nelson and Colne, which called for wide reforms in the municipality to improve conditions of labour, public services and education.⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ The programme received the S.D.F.'s full sympathy and in the 1902 municipal elections the Trades Council went to the extent of giving moral backing to a socialist candidate against a Liberal at Burnley Wood ward.⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Clearly there was sufficient common ground for liaison, which eventually came in 1904 after a year of serious depression in the local cotton trade, with rising unemployment. Attention was turned towards the control of Poor Law relief by the Board of Guardians and the Trades Council and S.D.F. combined to make an ambitious though disappointing assault in the Guardians election.⁽¹⁶⁶⁾

Instead of withdrawing Irving and the S.D.F. increased their efforts to consolidate a local L.R.C. which would include the Weavers' Association, the most decisive factor in Burnley working class politics. Early in 1905 the social democrats managed to bring all the local labour forces to a meeting which could discuss the formation of a Labour Representation Committee. The conference met at the Weavers' Institute in February; it was made up of delegates from the local Textile Trades Federation, representing the cotton unions, and officers of trades

unions, co-operative societies, the S.D.F. and the I.L.P.⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ No decisions were arrived at, however, until later in the month when the Trades Council in its independent capacity had been consulted. Then it was declared that "the time is opportune for the formation of a local Labour Representation Committee on the same basis as the national Labour Representation Committee."⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ Arrangements were made to meet regularly in the Weavers' Institute and a constitution was drawn up which allowed socialists, as L.R.C. candidates, to declare themselves as such before the electorate. The Weavers' formally gave their blessings to the new alliance in June 1905.⁽¹⁶⁹⁾

The L.R.C.'s first political move was to organise a municipal election campaign for 1905.⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ Five candidates, at least two of them socialists, were nominated. The results were as discouraging as those of 1904, only one person, a social democrat, being elected. Moreover the problem of achieving coherent political action was exacerbated by the pressures of sectarian loyalties. Irving, for instance, was bitterly attacked by the Liberal press which suggested that the L.R.C. was a mere front for the socialists' schemes to lay hands on trade union money.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ There were many radicals in the Weavers' Association willing to listen to these allegations; many also disagreed with the proviso that allowed socialists to announce their creed at elections whilst other candidates could not reveal their Liberal or Conservative

sympathies from within the L.R.C.⁽¹⁷²⁾ Policy also posed a stumbling block; some sections of the L.R.C. proposed to exclude religious teaching from schools, an idea that was vehemently opposed by the chapel-goers.⁽¹⁷³⁾ The disappointing results of 1905 therefore became the signal for expressions of dissent, principally from the Weavers; in February 1906 the Association held a members' ballot on its future connection with the L.R.C. and a motion for withdrawal was passed by 6685 votes to 5647.⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ The rivalries of old were thus re-established and the Burnley L.R.C. lost its principal financial contributor. The alliance continued, though only Irving was elected in 1906, whilst within two years, infuriated by the mistrust of the Weavers, a group of the local S.D.F. set up an "impossibilist" cell that was later converted into a short lived branch of the S.P.G.B.⁽¹⁷⁵⁾

The fruitless hostility within Burnley's Labour movement was a marked contrast to the co-operation seen at Nelson. United the Weavers and the S.D.F. could have formed a very strong party and it seems likely that within the L.R.C. this unity might have been achieved. As it was the supporters of a traditional trade union line were apt to regard the social democrats as political pariahs and consequently a town rich in working class political vigour was unable to return a Labour candidate before the First World War.

4. Conclusion

The local labour groups described above cannot be said to have effected a radical change in the political representation of Lancashire by 1906. In only one town, Nelson, had a Labour party achieved control in the local Council. Yet they were the bases upon which the future Labour party in the region was to be built; as such their character in 1906 was important since with the unfavourable conditions for growth in post-war years the Labour party was to rely very much on what it had created in the early years of the century. The really significant feature emerging from a study of local labour politics between 1900 and 1906 is the great strength of trades unionism in forging the character of the Lancashire Labour movement. In particular, the commitment of the miners and cotton workers to the L.R.C. can be seen as the logical outcome of their traditional policies for remedial legislation on industrial questions. This assured the L.R.C. in Lancashire of strong, institutional foundations but, with the exception of a few areas, deprived the movement of the wider, more comprehensive appeal of a mass political party.

Chapter 12

1906 AND AFTER

The General Election of 1906 was a political turning-point. Besides demonstrating a remarkable revival in the fortunes of the Liberal party it verified the emergence of the Labour vote in British politics; time proved the Liberal revival to be temporary but the Labour vote developed into a permanent feature of the twentieth century political scene. Looking back on the 1906 election it is easy to assume that the Liberal victory was a certainty, though to contemporaries, it must be appreciated, the outcome of the campaign was far from predictable. The Conservatives overestimated their chances of success; the Liberals, who had known only political disappointment for almost fifteen years, did not expect to win by a handsome margin and therefore worked hard to conciliate their new allies, the organised Labour parties, whose programme coincided sharply with their own. For the Labour groups 1906 represented a chance to achieve some short-term objectives and only a few of their followers hoped that it might bring about a sea change in political behaviour.

1. Liberal Recovery, 1900 - 1906

The Liberal recovery was startling. In 1900 the party had lost two successive General Elections by vast majorities and was seriously divided within itself over the South African War. Its position in Lancashire was so dishearteningly weak that it seemed as if the party might disintegrate, or enter into a long decline.⁽¹⁾ Even in 1902 the events at Clitheroe suggested that the traditionally Non-conformist

Liberal voters were being undermined by Labour's appeal to the working class. Yet by 1906 Lancashire, previously one of the most Tory regions in England, had completely switched its political allegiance; 55.6 per cent of the total votes cast were captured by Liberal and L.R.C. candidates, as against only 43 per cent in 1900. The Liberal - L.R.C. coalition was able to secure four times as many M.P.s as the Conservatives. In the districts with the highest incidence of Catholics the change from the position of 1900 was equally startling; whilst in 1900 only 31 per cent of the vote had gone to the Liberals in these areas they now returned almost 49 per cent, Tory Liverpool showing a similar increase in the Liberal vote. Apparently the Liberal party had at last, with Labour help, managed to blanket the old Tory anti-catholic vote as well as to make itself the friend of all social classes; in 1900 the Liberals had failed in all except one seat in the middle class and socially mixed constituencies and taken only a quarter of the working class divisions; by 1906 all four middle class seats, seven out of eleven mixed and thirty out of thirty nine working class seats had gone Liberal. This was the most complete Liberal success that Lancashire had ever experienced: why was the party able to rise to such heights in a region long noted for its working class Toryism?

Two principal developments accounted for the Liberal recrudescence in the years between 1900 and 1906. First and most important, a series of issues arose through the Conservative government's policy which forced the Liberals to stand by their long established principles of economic and individual freedom and by so doing they found themselves closely in line with the aims of working class voters. The Conservatives had made a series of decisions that were not only controversial but which seemed near

revolutionary at the time. The most important was the Tariff Reform issue for which Chamberlain declared his support in 1903.⁽²⁾ The party was not united on this question, it is true, but the mere existence of influential Tories who favoured a protectionist policy was sufficient to throw the weight of working class opinion behind the Liberals, who maintained their faith in Free Trade. Tariff Reform raised the prospect of dearer food and this was sufficient to condemn it in the eyes of working men and women with a low earning power.

Another issue also aroused working class hostility; this was the problem of "Chinese Slavery" - the use by South African mineowners of cheap, indentured Chinese Labour. Balfour condoned this practice, appearing thereby to have scant regard for human dignity and seeming to ally himself with Capital against the interests of Labour. Self interest also played a part in working class indignation, for British workmen felt that their chances of emigrating to South Africa had been destroyed by the avarice of foreign capitalists.⁽³⁾ Coming, as it did, so soon after the Boer War, this issue made it appear that the military victory obtained was being used to strengthen a situation which was inadmissible to all trade unionists.

Nearer to home trade unionists were also angered by the Government's attitude to the Taff Vale decision; it had refused to consider immediate legislation to provide legal protection over union funds and the election of a Liberal Government offered the only hope of a speedy and satisfactory conclusion to this problem. All these issues had a more pressing urgency for working people and might therefore have been expected to play an important part in Lancashire's electoral decisions.

Finally, in Non-conformist areas all classes were united against the Government's Education Act of 1902; the school boards had been swept away and replaced by local education authorities, thus removing education from the direct control of democratically elected bodies. In the towns where the chapels predominated indignation meetings were frequent and Free Church Councils began to contest local elections in the hope of securing nominees on the new education authorities,⁽⁴⁾ for the Non-conformists had relied to a large extent on the school boards to exert their influence in education. The Education Act, however, was a less decisive source of antagonism against the Conservatives in Lancashire, since its effects had pleased Anglicans and Catholics, whose voluntary schools were now supported financially through the rates. In some towns education actually proved to be a point in the Conservatives' favour.

In general, however, the Liberals profited from these issues since they were able to stand both as a popular party and as the upholders of a "safety-first" policy, resisting Conservative changes and maintaining the established order.

A second cause of Liberal improvement was seen in an attempt to increase the party's efficiency at constituency level. In contrast to the disillusionment of 1900 many traditional Liberal supporters, both middle and working class, were being brought back into the party by the enthusiasm aroused through the political situation. Their willingness to vote for and work on behalf of the Liberal candidates was reflected in the party's increased vote and the high poll generally. It became

possible once more to find wealthy candidates in sufficient numbers to guarantee contests in strong Tory areas, a striking comparison with 1900 when ten seats had been abandoned outright in Lancashire because of Liberal apathy, and hasty, incomplete arrangements made in many others.⁽⁵⁾

By about 1905, therefore, a more confident attitude was becoming evident in the Liberal ranks as the party looked forward more optimistically to the forthcoming General Election. After twenty years of adversity events were at last beginning to favour the Liberals. Contemporary issues appeared to offer the most likely source of success and the Liberals decided to swim with the tide, fighting the Conservatives over policy matters. It is in any case doubtful whether at this time the Liberals could have converted popular enthusiasm into a buoyant and effective party machine in time for the 1906 General Election, and they did not attempt to do so. Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal Chief Whip, decided instead to implement a partial re-organisation of party machinery whilst recruiting the support in an electoral pact of the new L.R.C.s, which had been capturing the loyalties of trade unionists and socialists, to be used "against a common enemy."⁽⁶⁾ The alliance eventually negotiated⁽⁷⁾ was beneficial to both parties since it relieved Labour candidates of Liberal opposition and took a heavy financial burden from Liberal shoulders in working class constituencies. Gladstone could therefore leave several such constituencies to be nursed by the L.R.C. and concentrate his own party's efforts on areas where organisation was in need of repair.

After the 1900 General Election Gladstone had reorganised his party's structure in London and appointed three organisers to "perambulate the country" setting aside £3,000 for the aid of "hopelessly impecunious constituencies".⁽⁸⁾ Some of the Liberal difficulties in improving constituency machinery can be seen by the problems faced in Lancashire. The cost of fighting some seats was

very high, especially if they were double member ones or county divisions which covered an extensive area.⁽⁹⁾ Consequently many local associations found that to defray costs it was easier to nominate a wealthy middle class candidate prepared to dig deeply into his pocket than to attempt the creation of a mass party. Gladstone himself frequently advised such a course; of T. F. Byrne at Widnes in 1900, for instance, Gladstone "frankly doubted his power to be able to give enough if he wins".⁽¹⁰⁾ Local associations were sometimes fortunate in securing a grant from Gladstone's central fund to run a candidate; Blackburn Liberals, for example, complained of possessing no "rich men" but wanted to contest one seat alongside Philip Snowden against the Conservatives; by persuading Gladstone of the chances for success (a misplaced optimism as it turned out) they were helped out with expenses.⁽¹¹⁾ Such instances were rare, though, for as was seen at Accrington Sir J. F. Leese's financial problems almost led to his withdrawal, but there was little Gladstone could do to help him even though he knew the seat might fall to Labour should Leese retire.⁽¹²⁾ Stockport Liberals, faced with a double member seat to contest admitted to needing "a man of influence" if they were to fight in both seats⁽¹³⁾ and their subsequent inability to find one led to the unopposed second candidature of G. J. Wardle for the L.R.C. For the 1906 election Liberal selection committees in general chose a traditional type of candidate, either businessman, employer or successful lawyer, many of them being familiar figures from the 1890's and earlier. As middle class men they inevitably supported a middle class policy and would continue to do so as long as they controlled the purse strings. When middle and working

class aims corresponded closely, as in 1906, this situation presented no problems but the objectives of the two classes could easily be estranged as they had been during the Home Rule issues of 1886; with Labour creating its own loyalties and party machinery this might prove dangerous for Liberalism.

The Liberals did attempt to revitalise their party organisation at Manchester in the early 1900's but the effort did not produce immediately effective results mainly because it had come too late. Herbert Gladstone was negotiating for unopposed L.R.C. candidatures as early as 1902 in the city, complaining that the Liberal Union had neglected constituency work in favour of ostentatious political meetings in the Free Trade Hall.⁽¹⁴⁾ The inadequacies of Liberal organisation during the 1890's in the city have already been pointed out in Chapter Nine; by 1900 no improvements had been made. The continued exodus of middle class people from the city centre to the outskirts⁽¹⁵⁾ led to a withering of Liberal organisation in the working class areas by the turn of the century. It was clear that without some degree of centralisation the poorer divisional associations would be unable to continue but the jealously guarded autonomy of the wealthy constituencies prevented change. The defeat of 1900 produced astringent self-criticism, however, and the following year it was decided to re-organise the party structure with the primary aim of creating a central treasury.⁽¹⁶⁾ In 1903 these arrangements culminated when the Manchester Liberal Federation came into existence with a complex federated structure of councils and committees elected on a representative basis from the various divisions; a treasurer collected the Federation's finances and

dispensed money according to need, whilst a secretary, who combined the duties of a professional registration agent, was appointed at a salary of £500 a year.⁽¹⁷⁾ Even with this more practicable system the Federation was unable to clear its financial deficit during the next ten years,⁽¹⁸⁾ and one or two divisional organisations still proved obdurate over co-operation with Labour candidates.⁽¹⁹⁾ In 1906 two L.R.C. candidates were allowed straight fights with the Conservatives in Manchester constituencies and, as was seen, the Manchester Labour party began to develop into a serious rival to the Liberals as the opposition in the Conservative controlled City Council. The Manchester Liberal Federation was not able to resist the growth of a trade union based Labour party.

If this was true of Manchester how far might it also be true of other towns? One of the strongest levers Gladstone had been able to use to persuade his local associations not to oppose Labour candidates had been the financial strength of the L.R.C. In 1903 its Newcastle conference had agreed to create a Parliamentary Fund to finance Labour candidates; it was resolved not to make any payments from the Fund until £2500 had been collected, except in the event of a General Election.⁽²⁰⁾ So successful was the response of affiliated societies that by the end of 1903 £2277 had been collected and levies to it were made compulsory in 1904.⁽²¹⁾ This money was therefore used in 1906 to sponsor a Liberal Labour coalition but when it is claimed that the Labour victories in Lancashire were gained with "the tacit support of official Liberalism"⁽²²⁾

this should not imply that there was any altruistic self-denial on the part of Liberal associations. They had already lost their pre-emptive claims to working class constituencies and were unable to challenge their occupation by Labour representation committees.

The electoral arrangement therefore benefited the Labour Representation Committee in Lancashire. Double members seats offered the easiest chances for clear Labour runs: they were cheaper to contest with only one candidate which meant that a Labour man could be promoted without the Liberals losing entirely their parliamentary influence. Blackburn, Bolton, Stockport and Oldham therefore posed no problems. Some difficulties were encountered at Preston in 1904 when it seemed that the local Labour party was unable to find a candidate; for a time the Preston Liberal Association experienced some trouble in finding a second candidate itself⁽²³⁾ but the situation was eased early in 1905 by the nomination of J. T. MacPherson for the L.R.C., an event which greatly relieved Liberal problems. Single member seats required more careful handling by Gladstone and MacDonald because if a Labour man was elected with Liberal support he had to be strictly acceptable to the local Liberals before they would renounce their parliamentary claims. A difficulty on this level arose at Barrow; the local Liberals considered their nominee, Conybeare, to be a good candidate, especially since Duncan of the L.R.C. was an outsider and not thought to be very high in the electorate's estimation.⁽²⁴⁾ Nor was Duncan very acceptable to J. R. MacDonald and Keir Hardie, who attempted to remove him.⁽²⁵⁾ But the Barrow L.R.C. stood firm, eventually winning over the Liberal

support. A reversal of this situation was seen at Accrington, however, the main difference being that Accrington was a far stronger area for Liberalism than Barrow and consequently the local Liberals had a just claim to contest the seat. In the single member constituencies of Clitheroe, St. Helens, Ince, Newton, Westhoughton, Kirkdale and West Toxteth, where Liberalism was at a discount, there was no opposition to Labour candidates.

The Manchester area presented some of the most serious obstacles to electoral negotiation. In 1902 the Manchester Liberal Union had indicated to Gladstone that four working class constituencies - Manchester North East, East and South West, as well as Salford South - might be suitable for Labour candidates. Gladstone even suggested that Arthur Henderson might go to Salford South⁽²⁶⁾ whilst the Manchester Liberals seemed keen to have G. N. Barnes⁽²⁷⁾ The Manchester L.R.C. had not at this stage decided upon its candidates, and not until September 1903 was J. R. MacDonald informed that three men - G. D. Kelley, Tom Fox and John Harker - had been selected to run in Manchester South West, North East and Salford West respectively.⁽²⁸⁾ MacDonald at first accepted this list, apparently under the impression that Harker was to contest Salford South⁽²⁹⁾ where the local Liberals had recently made another urgent appeal for a candidate.⁽³⁰⁾ MacDonald, realising his mistake, learnt that Salford West was not vacant, but in fact very much Liberal. In the same month he tried to persuade Harker

to move to Salford South⁽³¹⁾ but the issue was resolved when Tom Fox withdrew from Manchester North East and Harker took his place.⁽³²⁾ This left two Labour candidates in constituencies which offered clear runs and in 1905 Harker himself resigned over policy differences, his place taken by J. R. Clynes.⁽³³⁾ There was some pressure from local I.L.P. members to contest both Manchester East and Salford West with socialist candidates but the scheme received no encouragement from the Manchester Labour party. Gorton had originally been set aside for Labour⁽³⁴⁾ but during 1903 an independent Liberal emerged who had to be discouraged by neighbouring Liberal associations.⁽³⁵⁾ The least manageable constituency was Eccles, which was mentioned only once in Gladstone's correspondence; in 1905, as an impending three cornered fight.⁽³⁶⁾ At the same time the Labour candidate, Ben Tillett, was apparently supported by the national L.R.C.⁽³⁷⁾ The seat had a fairly marginal history, though the Liberals had won only once, in 1892, since the Third Reform Act. The local Labour party was insistent upon promoting Tillett, who was nominated early in 1904, receiving support from Thomas Ashton of the Spinners, John Harker and Stephen Walsh.⁽³⁸⁾ Neither MacDonald nor Gladstone were able to make any impression on their followers in this division.

2. The L.R.C. Campaign, 1906.

When polling began on January 12th, 1906 there were 16 L.R.C. candidates in the Lancashire industrial region, as well as four independent labour or socialist candidates. Though all but one of the

L.R.C. candidates had been relieved of Liberal opposition they could not afford to underestimate the task in front of them. With trade union support the financial problems for Labour candidates were not as pressing as they had been in previous elections, yet the party lacked experienced, full-time agents and workers, few of its leaders were nationally known figures and local party roots had at best only recently taken hold, whilst in many places there were no real roots at all. Only where socialist groups had been energetic had constituency groups mustered their fighting strength by contesting municipal elections and only by local success could parliamentary ambitions of a lasting nature be realised. As events were to prove, however, these handicaps remained theoretical for the time being for the Labour party was able to profit from the special circumstances which swept the Liberals into power. Significantly, there was little to choose between Liberal and Labour at the polls. The constituency campaigns in which Labour figured therefore reveal much about the Labour movement as it was in 1906, about its organisation, the view of its candidates, and about the issues, both national and local, which it deemed important. (39)

There were 7 L.R.C. candidates in the cotton towns; Free Trade was expected to be the main issue as the Cotton Factory Times had come out strongly against Protection and it was not thought that the cotton trade would be tempted to support Chamberlain's proposals, especially

since the economy had boomed considerably after 1904, and trade union secretaries were reporting "the brightest and most prosperous year that has come to the Lancashire cotton trade within the memory of the present generation",⁽⁴⁰⁾ or "continued prosperous and profitable condition".⁽⁴¹⁾ Not all the Conservative candidates were Tariff Reformers, however, and this caused some variation in the campaigns. At Bolton, for instance, there was only one Conservative candidate in a double member seat, and his espousal of Free Trade made it likely that he might be returned. A. H. Gill, the Labour candidate, stressed his interest in social and industrial reforms, speaking on old age pensions and legislation to improve the compensation paid to sick and injured workmen. Both he and the Liberal, Harwood, gave assurances that they would uphold the principles of Free Trade, but this was not the important issue in the campaign; for some time there was speculation on the possibility of Harwood's losing votes because of his agreement with the 1902 Education Act but in fact he was elected with Gill by a comfortable margin, a high proportion of votes being split between them, suggesting that Labour supporters were radicals; there was little cross voting, on the other hand, between Labour and Conservative. One encouraging feature of the campaign was the Labour party's efficient organisation, providing election literature, motor cars and carriages in numbers equalling the other parties.⁽⁴²⁾

Conservative Free Trades were also in evidence at Blackburn, but the campaign differed from that of Bolton in many respects. Philip Snowden was the L.R.C. candidate but unlike A. H. Gill showed little taste for overt co-operation with the Liberals. Because of the Conservative's position on Free Trade and their disavowal of the Chinese labour in South Africa the contest developed less along policy differences and became a keen, personal and sometimes bitter struggle between Snowden and the veteran Tory, W. H. Hornby - the "owd gam cock",⁽⁴³⁾ who had been M.P. for Blackburn since 1886. The Conservatives based their campaign on the defence of the Church and the public house, the fundamentals of working class Toryism; Snowden consequently had to contend with many attacks upon his alleged irreligion. By election day the contest had degenerated into many petty squabbles, relieved only by Snowden's exhilarating speeches and his novel method of holding two meetings concurrently. Snowden's personal appeal and the support he received from Irish electors⁽⁴⁴⁾ was enough to place him in second position closely behind Hornby.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The strongest Labour prospects were at Clitheroe, held by the L.R.C. since 1902. The General Election proved to be an extremely one-sided affair since the local Conservatives had not entered a candidate and it had seemed until two weeks before the poll that David Shackleton would again be unopposed. A late rival appeared in B.J. Belton, an Independent Tariff Reformer and Catholic, from Surrey.

Belton was a man of strongly expressed views on Protection, what he called "real free trade", and education but Shackleton's electoral organisation was vastly superior⁽⁴⁶⁾ and the man himself had proved an able Member of Parliament who had conducted himself well in the pressure for a Trades Disputes Bill. His election was certain and he secured a massive majority by gaining the working class votes in the small industrial centres of Nelson, Colne, Brierfield and Padiham. The contest helped the local Conservatives to pin-point some areas of anti-Labour voters, especially in the more rural villages of Chatburn and Trawden, and even in Clitheroe itself.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The Free Trade issue was of greatest consequence in the contest at Preston. The Liberal and Labour candidates were Free Traders whilst their two Conservative opponents supported Tariff Reform. Since the bye-election contest of John Hodge in 1903 the Preston Liberals had revived strongly under the inspiration of their agent, Fred Marchant, whose work was encouraged by many local Conservatives who had broken with their own party over Tariff Reform. Both Cox, the Liberal, and J. T. MacPherson, the L.R.C. candidate, appeared to the electors as members of the same party, so similar were their programmes; they often held joint meetings in which leading citizens from both parties assisted in defending the cause of Free Trade. The Conservative Sitting Members, Tomlinson and Kerr, were unable to make headway with their Tariff Reform proposals against the tide of popular enthusiasm, many of their early meetings actually being disturbed by demonstrations

of hostile opinion. Consequently they began to emphasise the religious issue, hoping for support from the Catholic electors, mostly English and reckoned to be about one third of the electorate; the Conservative education policy was popular among them and finally became the predominant issue in the Tory campaign. MacPherson, a fresh faced, eager candidate, showed little interest in social reform and dealt only briefly with the Chinese Slavery question; he preferred to rely on the Free Trade standpoint and with an efficient campaign committee which enlisted the help of many women volunteers he gained a large amount of "plumpers" as well as many Tory and Liberal cross-votes, all of which helped him to an easy victory.⁽⁴⁸⁾

The other three contests in the cotton towns involved socialist candidates. All three showed a much greater taste than the L.R.C. candidates for discussing the state of society and proportionately less reverence for the popular issues of the day. H. M. Hyndman at Burnley was opposed by a Conservative Free Trader but his main rival for the working class vote was a Liberal Labour candidate, Fred Maddison. The Liberal manifesto was very comprehensive, and though mainly a defence of freedom in trade and education displayed a wide appreciation of social and industrial problems and of the legislative reforms required. Hyndman's reaction was to make a guarded gesture in support of Free Trade though he was careful to qualify this with the warning that he "did not believe that Free Trade would solve the difficulties of the country". It seemed certain that the working class vote would be split and the outcome depend on whichever side could secure a

marginal advantage; for a while it seemed that Hyndman might win over the Irish voters, especially after a wholehearted appeal for him by Michael Davitt, the Nationalist; but the Irish League eventually recommended its members to vote Liberal on the Home Rule issue. The high poll - 95 per cent. - testified to the hard work of all three parties whilst the respectable S.D.F. poll, only 33 votes behind the Conservative runner-up was a significant advance on the 1895 figure and proof of the social democrats continued vitality in the town.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The two remaining socialists, Dan Irving at Accrington and S. G. Hobson at Rochdale, had little chance of winning and their main hope of success was in consolidating the socialist movement in their respective areas. Irving moved some way towards this aim. He offered the voters socialist measures of a visionary nature but declined to comment on Free Trade. Organisation, however, decided the outcome in this division; the Liberals directed their campaign from the numerous radical clubs throughout the district and therefore gained a considerable vote from all the centres of population. Irving, handicapped by the time spent as Hyndman's agent at Burnley, was able to work effectively only at Clayton-le-Moors and among the miners at Altham and Hapton. His campaign failed to reach a sufficient number of electors to be a challenge to the Liberals but one or two pockets of support for future Labour candidates were established and Irving polled creditably, unaffected by the mere handful of votes taken by the independent Labour candidate, S. M. Holden.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The socialist campaign at Rochdale never got off the ground and though Hobson

propounded some prescient social policies such as free meals for school children and old age pensions the lack of any significant support from local trade unions ensured the isolation of the socialists.⁽⁵¹⁾

There was also a heavy concentration of Labour candidates in the mining region of central Lancashire. In three constituencies the campaigns followed a corresponding pattern. At St. Helens, Ince and Westhoughton the Labour candidates were all trade unionists and prominent radicals of former days. All supported Free Trade whilst their Conservative opponents, though by no means dogmatic Protectionists, attempted to shift their ground to the Home Rule and Education issues. St. Helens offered the Tories some hopes, since there had been a serious slump in the local glass bottle trade during the early years of the century, allegedly caused by German competition;⁽⁵²⁾ the situation appeared favourable for Tariff Reform whilst at the same time the Education issue prompted the Catholic clergy to urge their flock to support the Conservatives. Irish Nationalists, on the other hand, were more interested in a Home Rule Bill and had been told by Michael Davitt that the L.R.C. was the party for workingmen. Thomas Glover, the Labour candidate, concentrated on issues arising from social class, emphasising the importance of Free Trade and hence cheap food to the working men and women, and attacking his opponent, Seton Karr, for his antipathy towards the legal reform of trade union status. Glover also claimed that the L.R.C. intended to "get social reforms passed through the House of Commons which would lighten the burden of the workers and would improve their condition". So successful was he

in convincing people of this that Seton Karr found himself having to match Glover's promises, and by fighting on his opponent's terms Karr's campaign suffered. Glover's organisation proved excellent, for he won all but one (North Windle) of the wards in St. Helens; the campaign was one of the most interesting Labour contests of 1906 for the way in which it overcame initial adversity through the progressive outlook of the candidate.⁽⁵³⁾ Stephen Walsh's campaign at Ince lacked a dominant issue and the contest proceeded in an uneventful fashion. Walsh stressed Free Trade and Colonel Blundell, the Conservative colliery owner, attempted to arouse Tory passions by speaking of the dangers of Home Rule for Ireland. Probably the most decisive factor in the contest, however, was the effect of an anti-employer backlash, produced by a strike of some two thousand colliers, at Blundell's pits in the summer of 1905. The miners constituted the majority of the electorate and this was sufficient to secure a convincing win for Walsh.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The contest in the extensive division of Westhoughton was fairly short. Lord Stanley, the well-known local landowner, was defending his seat against W. T. Wilson, who offered mainly a programme of trade union reforms designed to capture the working class vote in the small industrial towns of Horwich and Blackrod, with their radical tradition. Wilson secured a good poll in the many scattered villages and the "swing" away from the Conservatives was much higher than the regional average.⁽⁵⁵⁾

At Newton-le-Willows a division of the votes on a class basis was very pronounced. The contest was between J. A. Seddon, a St. Helens trade unionist, and Colonel Pilkington of the glass manufacturing company. The constituency was a large one with varied social and occupational groups; the Conservatives were strongly entrenched in the agricultural districts and among the middle class freeholder voters at Dentons Green. The Labour vote was expected to come from the miners at Ashton, Haydock and Golborne and from the workers in the railway shops at Earlestown. Because of the scattered nature of the industrial communities the L.R.C. organisation was faced with considerable difficulties in canvassing, especially since there was no strong Labour party to act as a base for operations in any of the towns. This, more than anything, probably accounted for the narrow Labour victory. Seddon's policies were aimed at the trade unionists, for whom he offered a reversal of the Taff Vale judgement, an Eight Hours Day and old age pensions. He claimed that the election was about domestic issues, promising that the Labour party would become a vehicle for social reforms "to make the homes of England a little bit brighter". He committed himself to a thorough investigation of the former Conservative government's record but his message failed to convert the middle classes. (56)

Wigan withstood the swing to the left in 1906, remaining in Conservative hands. The reason for this was that the Labour candidate, Thorley Smith, a local councillor, received no support from the L.R.C.

and had to face Liberal opposition. He was, moreover, campaigning for Women's Suffrage, not an issue at this time which roused much enthusiasm. Since the Liberal duplicated most of Smith's other proposals there was a serious split in the working class vote, much of which went to the Conservative Free Trader, Sharp Powell, who won easily.⁽⁵⁷⁾

The first Lancashire constituencies to poll were the six divisions of Manchester. The Conservative clearly failed in their appeals for Tariff Reform and nowhere was their defeat more abject than at North West Manchester where Winston Churchill triumphed on a Free Trade policy, the issue on which he had left the Conservative party in 1904. The Manchester divisions varied considerably in social and industrial character but the election issues changed little: "from the first to the last", commented a jubilant Manchester Guardian, "the one supreme issue was Free Trade".⁽⁵⁸⁾ The two Labour candidates, J. R. Clynes at North East and G. D. Kelley at South West, stood in wholly working class districts, both densely populated and with serious housing problems. Not only were both campaigns covered by the Gladstone MacDonald entente, but the local Liberal associations in both divisions gave full support-with volunteer election workers - to the L.R.C. organisations, assistance which was particularly beneficial to Clynes, who had been adopted only in the mid summer of 1905. The two L.R.C. candidates issued identical manifestos which stated in principle their views on measures to improve the social condition of working people by eradicating the class monopoly of wealth; they then outlined their

opinions on current issues. Kelley emphasised the Chinese Slavery problem more than Clynes and was required also to discuss education more fully because of the higher proportion of Catholics in his constituency; he was rewarded by seeing the Irish headquarters in the Stretford Road displaying posters which urged the workers to vote Labour. Neither of their Conservative opponents tackled the Free Trade question very comprehensively and Sir James Fergusson's campaign against Clynes was a rather inept affair, seeming to rely on the candidate's reputation as the division's M.P. over the past twenty years. Clynes almost certainly gained votes from a large number of working men who had previously voted Tory.

The same was true of John Hodge at Gorton, an industrial division where the electors were mainly engaged in engineering and in the hat making industry at Denton. The Labour canvass pointed to an overwhelming victory for Hodge but the Tories, who had experienced outright hostility only at Lower Openshaw, worked enthusiastically. Hodge concentrated upon preaching Free Trade and was possibly assisted on his road to victory by Conservative attempts to slacken the socialist influence in the trade unions.⁽⁶⁰⁾ The pattern of Labour gains was followed at Stockport, where G. J. Wardle of the Railway Servants stood in harness with a Liberal for the double member seat. Wardle received open Liberal support and in return asked his followers to cast their second vote for the Liberal candidate.⁽⁶¹⁾ Eccles, where Ben Tillett

of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union was the L.R.C. candidate, had not been included in the Liberal - L.R.C. arrangements; Tillett was therefore opposed by a Liberal candidate but his chances of victory were even more seriously decreased when he fell ill during the campaign and went on a cruise to convalesce; the local I.L.P. carried on the fight but Eccles followed the example of neighbouring West Salford by choosing a Free Trader with connections in local industry. (62)

In the isolated industrial town of Barrow-in-Furness the Free Trade question was of great importance to the local workers. The Conservatives had been strong in Barrow over previous years because of their more vigorous stand on foreign policy, through which Barrow's interest in naval shipbuilding might prosper. When, therefore, Charles Duncan of the L.R.C. told his shipyard workers in 1906 that the town had "sprung into being largely as a result of Free Trade policy" they were inclined to agree with him. His Conservative opponent was a shipbuilder himself, but also a Tariff Reformer and he realised that his wisest course would be to stress the continuation of "strong" foreign policy under a Conservative government. Duncan, a member of the I.L.P., scarcely needed to raise the complications of socialism with the electors since he was able to use the symbols of a "Big Loaf" and a "Little Loaf" to great effect. (63)

The rise of Labour as a parliamentary force was not evident in Liverpool. The city was still enmeshed in its nineteenth century religious antagonism from which the Orangeist Conservatives had Protestant^{support} in all but the most Catholics and Irish division - Scotland. There were two Labour candidates in 1906; James Sexton of the Liverpool Dockers at West Toxteth and James Conley, an official of the Boilermakers' Union, at Kirkdale. Sexton's Irish background was something of a disability in his campaign since the constituency had many Protestant voters who would not have taken very easily to a man, who in his youth, had been a supporter of the Irish National League. Conley was also of Irish descent and Irishmen were equally sparsely distributed in Kirkdale. Both constituencies were working class areas and the Labour candidates had to attempt to make their policies overcome the traditional religious allegiances. Sexton tried to answer the questions raised by poverty and unemployment with socialists argument and fought a good campaign by attacking with sincerity what he regarded to be the fraudulent behaviour of the Conservatives towards the working class. But he could make little headway against the emotive calumnies of the Tories, who castigated the "ignorant Home Rulers". The extent of the Labour appeal may be judged from the fact that Conley was no less successful than Sexton in terms of votes in spite of his failure to suggest what Labour policies might mean to working people.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Conley,

however, had the more efficient organisation and he had been nursing the division since 1904 whereas Sexton's adoption was late in 1905.

3. Aftermath.

Liberalism's sweeping victory of 1906 illustrated the potential electoral strength of left-wing forces operating under favourable circumstances. Yet whilst the Conservative vote of 1906 was actually lower than in 1885, despite the increased electorate, it had retained a remarkably constant level over the previous twenty years. Almost immediately after 1906 the Conservatives began to reduce the margin and in 1910, when the party dropped the liability of tariff reform, they were in striking distance of parity.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Liberal success had been based upon the coincidence of influential, though temporary, issues that gradually lost their political effect. Moreover 1906 was only a parliamentary victory; in most of the large towns - Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, Blackburn, Bolton and Preston - the Conservatives dominated municipal politics.

Of the Labour party's Lancashire M.P.'s only two - Snowden and Clynes - had achieved any prominence in the socialist movement; Snowden was the only one not to have been sponsored by a trade union. Thus the trade union element was exceptionally strong and able to lend its weight to the Trade Disputes Bill and working class measures favoured by the Liberals such as the Unemployed Workmen Bill; on the other hand it could provide no political alternative to Liberalism. Before the First World War the parliamentary position of Labour in Lancashire did not improve. Some gains were made in local elections, most successfully at Manchester and usually at the expense of the Liberal party. Few

local Labour parties had progressed beyond the stage of management committees for trade union M.P.'s before 1914 and even fewer allowed individual membership to those not already members of an affiliated union or socialist society. Nevertheless the Labour principle had been established and was attractive enough to win over the Miners' Federation of Great Britain in 1909. No doubt there were still many trade unionists who opposed the Labour party outright as well as some who preserved a minority group mentality, wishing Labour well but voting Liberal or Conservative in important elections. But a new generation was growing up for whom the Labour party would appear as fact of political life and it was to this sector of the community that the party would have to look for support.

The First World War clearly enhanced Labour's position as a political force. It was responsible for the well-known split in the Liberal party between the followers of Asquith and Lloyd George, with the latter's participation in a Conservative dominated Coalition government in the immediate post-war years. The trade unions had also played a crucial role in the war effort by sharing in government and concerting industry; with full employment their numbers swelled, increasing the Labour party's finances and active membership. The War also resulted in the 1918 Reform Act which extended the franchise to almost all adult males and to women over thirty. In the municipal elections of 1919 the Labour party made extensive gains throughout the country; Lancashire was no exception. Now, in contrast to the

disproportionate picture of pre-war days, only one town in the region, Bacup, was without Labour representatives on its local council. Manchester advanced quickly towards an archetypal political alignment based on class; the new working class wards, created in the city immediately after the war, were seized by Labour, helping the party to establish superiority in the new parliamentary divisions of Ardwick, Clayton and Platting. At Liverpool 21 Labour councillors were returned in 1919, an increase of eleven over pre-war days, with the encouraging prospect that the working class was beginning to throw over its old allegiances: ten of the Labour gains had been made at the expense of the Conservatives. Heavy Tory defeats were seen in their old strongholds of Preston, Blackburn, Bolton and Birkenhead, the damage being done by Labour. At Wigan the Labour party, with the second largest group in the Council, controlled a Progressive coalition of Liberals and socialists which constituted a majority of the councillors. Labour was also beginning to make its political breakthrough in towns which had before the War witnessed no local labour movement: Bury, Widnes, Mossley, Southport and Heywood were examples of this trend. At Stalybridge, on the other hand, the Conservatives and Liberals had already negotiated an anti-Labour pact which was responsible for the defeat of seven Labour candidates in 1919.⁽⁶⁶⁾

Polling was light and the Labour party clearly exhibited a zeal and efficiency which the established parties could not match.⁽⁶⁷⁾

But was this a new dawn for the Labour party in Lancashire? The next two decades were a disappointing period for the party nationally, fraught by the problems of a Minority Government, unemployment and internal disruption. Even in this context, however, Lancashire's position in the party declined. In pre-war years Labour M.P.'s from Lancashire had been on average about one third of the Parliamentary Labour party but after 1922 they were never more than one seventh (1929) and in 1931 were less than one tenth. Moreover a closer look at the real Labour strongholds in Lancashire shows that the party was most successful in the areas where advances had been made before the War. (Map 12).

The reason for the lack of expansion after 1919 lay partly in the economic and social changes in Lancashire during the 1920's and 1930's. In short, the Labour party was attempting to expand in a society that was stagnating. To say that the economy of the region collapsed during this period would not be an exaggeration. The cotton trade slumped drastically, mainly as a result of foreign competition, the decline of home markets and bad industrial management; because of the linked industrial structure of the region its ancillary trades also declined. Before the First World War the difference between the rates of decline in industrial output and population had been small enough to keep the economy steady with only temporary periods of unemployment, but the Depression of the 1920's created so sudden a downswing in industrial activity that the staple trades were completely unable to sustain the high population. Widespread, permanent unemployment resulted, reaching a peak of over half a million workers,

two thirds of them men, in 1930-31 and 1933. Despite occasional years of revival, especially 1927, the previous high level of activity was not reproduced; neither could the newer engineering industries provide the buoyancy needed to sustain the region's economy, their existence serving only to mitigate the severity of unemployment. The coarse weaving centres, around Blackburn, and the mining communities in the central area of the coalfield were the worst hit with more than a quarter of the working population unemployed. Since three fifths of the Lancashire working population was engaged in declining staple industries many other mining and cotton towns experienced unemployment at the rate of between 15 and 25 per cent of the working population.⁽⁶⁸⁾

The social consequences of this collapse were crucial to political development. The various economic sub-regions found it difficult to attract new industries and with them the new migrant workers who would have supplied fresh vigour to the trade unions and Labour party. The population remained rooted, slow to realise the extent of unemployment and its perdurability and in any case without the industrial training necessary to transfer to new jobs. In towns for so long dominated by a single trade, the workforce could only hope for an economic revival and therefore remained, slightly stupefied, undynamic, conservative in outlook. In the more economically diversified centres around Manchester some workers were absorbed into more healthy industries by means of extending their journey to work by public transport, but

this was not always possible in the comparatively isolated weaving towns of north east Lancashire, with approximately four fifths of their workers in declining trades, or on Merseyside, with its high proportion of unskilled labour.⁽⁶⁹⁾ The cotton unions were never again able to reach their peak membership of almost half a million which had been achieved during the short post-war boom.

In this situation the Labour party proved to be equally as ineffective as the Conservatives in providing remedies for the problems of the economy. It therefore maintained a lasting hold only in those regions where a strong tradition had been established - Nelson and Colne, Manchester and the mining towns; in the first two cases its success owed something to the socialist influence which had been welded to trade unionism in the early years of the century; the mining towns around Wigan, St. Helens and Leigh became even more the rock-backbone of the party, which corresponded very closely to the trade union and hence to a feeling of class consciousness against the employers. It was not uncommon in these areas for individual membership of the Labour party to be quite low since its work was covered almost completely by the trade unions, whose funds provided the M.P.'s and whose branches formed the basis of party organisation.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Converts to the Labour party, for these were what was needed, did not come readily in other areas, and in consequence the need for more militant

propaganda with an alternative to the rather timid policies of MacDonald and Snowden accounted for the growing influence of a Labour left-wing in Lancashire during the 1920's. The I.L.P., under the direction of Elijah Sandham, "a blunt spoken and thick-headed businessman who had once been a pillar of local Conservatism",⁽⁷¹⁾ became more powerful than it had ever been in the region, refusing to supply, in Sandham's words, "publicity agents for the merits of the Labour party"⁽⁷²⁾ and cherishing parliamentary ambitions; it was a serious challenge to local Labour parties.⁽⁷³⁾ The Communist Party also did some useful work, reviving the old S.D.F. tactic of unemployed demonstrations under the leadership of Jack Braddock in Liverpool and organising cells among the miners of Wigan and Manchester. Its membership at Nelson was quite influential during the disputes in the cotton trade in 1927 but in general the Communist Party found the expanding engineering and electrical trades more congenial territory in which to work.⁽⁷⁴⁾

Clearly by about 1935 the Labour party had established itself as a viable alternative to Conservatism in Lancashire, but it is not the intention in the present study to examine in detail the Labour party's development during the inter-war years. It may be suggested, however, that the laggardly pace of Labour growth was conditioned by two factors: the economic conditions of the post-war years, which made it difficult for any party based on an industrial structure to expand; and, like Liberalism before it, the left wing party's tendency to develop internal

schisms as a result of differences over policy and tactics. The Labour party was particularly vulnerable to both of these situations in Lancashire; 1906 had produced a party with special emphasis on trade unionism as its mainstay; it was therefore strong in numbers but weak on policy. When the numbers contracted there was no wider political ideology to sustain interest.

APPENDIX: LABOUR AND SOCIALIST CAMPAIGNS, 1906

BARROW-IN-FURNESS		MANCHESTER S.W.	
Duncan	5167	Kelley	4101
Con.	3395	Con.	2875
BLACKBURN		ROCHDALE	
Con.	10291	Lib.	5912
Snowden	10282	Con.	4449
Con.	8932	Hobson	2506
Lib.	8892		
BOLTON		ST. HELENS	
Lib.	10953	Glover	6038
Gill	10416	Con.	4647
Con.	6693		
BURNLEY		PRESTON	
Lib.	5288	McPherson	10181
Con.	4965	Lib.	8538
Hyndman	4932	Con.	7303
		Con.	6856
LIVERPOOL KIRKDALE		STOCKPORT	
Con.	3749	Wardle	7299
Conley	3157	Lib.	6544
		Con.	4058
LIVERPOOL WEST TOXTETH		WIGAN	
Con.	3373	Con.	3573
Sexton	2592	Smith	2205
		Lib.	1900
MANCHESTER N.E.		ACCRINGTON	
Clynes	5386	Lib.	7209
Con.	2954	Irving	4852
		Lib.	619

CLITHEROE

Shackleton	12035
Con.	3828

ECCLES

Lib.	5841
Con.	5246
Tillett	3985

GORTON

Hodge	8566
Con.	4341

INCE

Walsh	8045
Con.	3410

NEWTON-le-WILLOWS

Seddon	6134
Con.	5893

WESTHOUGHTON

Wilson	9262
Con.	6134

CONCLUSION

Having charted some of the hitherto unexplored areas of Lancashire politics between the years 1885 and 1906 we may now consider a few of the more important features that have emerged and attempt to match the Lancashire political landscape with that of other regions.

First of all, in parliamentary politics we have seen that until 1900 the idea of independent labour representation made scant impression on the region's political structure. During the 'eighties and 'nineties parliamentary representation in Lancashire was shared between the two traditional nineteenth century parties, though the balance between them was very unequal. It would not be misleading to say that this was a period of Conservative hegemony. The Tory party acquired its strength through two principal factors. In the first place, there seems little doubt that the religious issue which divided immigrant Catholic Irish and indigenous Protestant workers produced a xenophobic backlash in the constituencies where Irish immigration was marked and that this helped to give the Tories a lasting, nationalist hardcore. Secondly, the party was able to win seats where the religious issue was not very pronounced because of its adversary's own problems. The series of extremely unfavourable electoral issues, encom-

passing Home Rule, the Indian cotton tariffs and the Boer War, which beset the Liberal party between 1885 and 1900 and caused it to lose much of what might have been considered its "natural" support enabled the Conservatives to gain seats where, in the normal course of events, they would have been far more hard pressed for votes. In 1906, however, with an Election fought on the Liberal party's own terms and with a fresh electoral register and greatly increased electorate, the party was in a position to sweep up most of the seats outside the hardened Tory districts in harness with the new Labour party. It would seem, therefore, that the Conservatives had been able to hold their own with a predominantly working class electorate until 1906, when the attractions of voting Liberal were considerably greater for working people than they had been for many years.

Yet conditions had not remained static since the 1880's. 1906 was more like an Indian Summer for the Liberals than a springtime of electoral resurgence. Their problems had not been simply electoral ones. Their unwillingness to place greater emphasis on social and industrial reform as a means of winning working class support betrayed the essentially middle class nature of their party. By the early 1900's the Liberal position as the champion of radical working men's aspirations was being strongly challenged by a working class party, the LRC, especially in the industrial towns of the region. It is worth considering, therefore, what the rise of the Labour party signified.

The emergence of the LRC was, to some extent, a symbiotic process. There had been two sides to working class action - socialism and trades unionism - and by about 1903 the relationship between them was beginning to resolve itself in favour of a trade union based Labour party; yet before this time the hopes for any sort of independent posture in working class politics had been kept alive by socialism. It was only in the areas where vigorous socialist groups were operating - Manchester, Burnley, Nelson and, in the later 1890's, Blackburn - that anything like permanent Labour parties had taken hold in the local political environment. For the rest, the picture was bleak; trade union political action was either hesitant and partisan, as with the cotton workers' amalgamations, or else confined to a couple of mining constituencies. Local labour representation of a non-socialist character, as pursued by the trades councils, might have gone on for years in its piecemeal fashion without ever threatening to change the political scene. With the socialists carrying the independent banner, then, why was it that they had not been able to exert greater influence?

The explanation lies in tactics rather than ideology. During twenty years of campaigning the SDF had failed to pursue a consistent course. Initially the social democrats had attempted to work as the sole agents in converting the working class to socialism ignoring the trade unions, the most powerful

existing expressions of working class strength and community of interest. This approach had been thrown over in the early 1890's when the SDF was made to realise the value of working inside a Labour Alliance. The experience of Burnley showed that social democracy could play an important part in working class politics. But many social democrats, especially national leaders who lacked first hand experience of Lancashire conditions, were never happy about co-operating with non-socialist trade unionists and it was their distaste for the liaison, rather than the attitude of the more pragmatic campaigners like Dan Irving, which led to the SDF's withdrawal from the LRC in 1901 and, consequently, from participating in the Labour Alliance at parliamentary level. Events had shown that this course was likely to have proved more fruitful than the policy of socialist unity, tested in some areas during the later 'nineties but never satisfactory in keeping alive SDF influence. It was thus the party's own internal discord, always likely to develop in an organisation keenly concerned with its ideology, that prevented its growth with the new LRC.

The story of the ILP before 1900 is very similar. As we have seen, the ILP had its internal divisions which served to weaken its political efforts. By most standards, there was little to choose between it and the SDF by the mid 1890's in

terms of influence. Yet the ILP had, in one respect, a more promising future: this stemmed from its greater willingness to enlist the support of non-socialist workers in the establishment of an independent workers' party. It was this facet of the party's policy, more so than its nonconformist character, as expressed through the Labour Church, or its links with the new unions, which were weak, that explains the ability of the ILP to draw ahead of the SDF in terms of support during the early 1900's.

But the rapid transition to Labour politics at the turn of the century was not the result of socialist leadership. Its inspiration was trades unionism. The issues that dominated political discussion at this time - particularly Taff Vale, but also industrial reforms and, after 1903, Tariff Reform - were all of relevance to working people, especially trade union members. Allied to relative decline in the conditions of the cotton and mining trades they were responsible for occasioning the Labour breakthrough in 1902-03. It was essentially a short term movement and the issues with which it was concerned seemed unlikely to sustain a new political party `a tout jamais. That there was no consistent and universal theory of political action binding trade union people at this time may be judged from the election campaigns of 1906. And yet we must be wary of seeing this increased interest in labour

representation as a bolt of lightning in a clear sky. The decisions of the miners and the cotton workers, arrived at as they were by a different process, to join the LRC was the outcome of almost fifteen years of experience in parliamentary lobbying and campaigning. The origins of the Labour breakthrough go back to 1885.

1906, then, saw the arrival of a working class political coalition based on co-operation between socialists and trade unionists, both at parliamentary and local level: the Labour Alliance which some people had been striving for since the early 1890's. But, to be sure, the influence of the socialists was now very restricted, especially in parliamentary politics; in Lancashire the ILP could point to very few MPs whilst the SDF, being outside the LRC, had none. The future seemed to suggest for the ILP the role of a ginger group, an elite of militant left wingers providing ideas and propaganda, but not numbers, for the Labour party. For the SDF the future looked even less promising.

Considering now the related position of the established political parties and the emergent Labour party we may ask - was this in any sense a period of political change? At the outset the inconclusive nature of the present study must be acknowledged. The terminal data of 1906 represents a General

Election fought over the issue of whether nineteenth century economic behaviour and thinking was to be rejected by the introduction of innovatory fiscal measures that would have destroyed the operation of classic free trade and brought in a form of imperial protectionist economics. As it was, the polls of 1906 confirmed the electorate's faith in the past. In other respects, too, 1906 represents no significant break; in Lancashire the Victorian economic and social structure, though suffering cracks in its facade, was still substantially intact. With the appearance of the Labour party we see a new political development, it is true, but even so we should be careful of overestimating with the benefit of hindsight the significance of this event. There was no guarantee at the time that the Labour party would burgeon into one of the great political parties; in fact, it seemed more likely that for the time being its position would be that of a parliamentary pressure group something like the Irish party. Furthermore, it has been argued that the Liberal party was not seriously weakened by the Labour challenge before 1914 but that its eventual demise was the result of special circumstances that occurred during the First World War. (1)

And yet, with the example of Lancashire to draw on, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that by about 1910 "Labour had come to stay". (2) Its future growth may still

have been uncertain but its appearance at Westminster confirmed the changes that had been taking place in politics since the Third Reform Act. In spite of the insubstantial appearance of Labour's ideology the party was far better placed than either the Conservatives or the Liberals to draw upon working class support on a class basis. Its basis, the trade unions, were genuinely working class institutions and it was this feature, more so than its ideology, that made the Labour party a distinctive new organisation. We have seen how it enabled the working class voter to make the transition from his previous political loyalty. Moreover, social change would determine the pace of Labour's growth. It has already been suggested that the factors which shaped the political environment during much of our period - religious conflict and social leadership - could not maintain their influence for ever; anti-immigrant feeling was probably on the wane at the time when this study closes whilst the pre-eminence enjoyed by industrialists in social and political life was also becoming less marked. But even without this change the politics of Lancashire were very different in 1906 from those of 1885. As P F Clarke has shown in his case study of Blackburn for the relatively short period 1900-1910, we are not witnessing simply swings in party fortunes but "a qualitative change in the style of politics." (3)

How does the Lancashire story compare with that of other regions? We are presented with many points at which the Labour movement in Lancashire differed from its counterparts in the rest of the British Isles. The most outstanding contrast lies in the fact that nowhere else was the early Labour breakthrough so pronounced. Two features - strong trades unionism and political divisions among the working class - have been isolated as exerting a major influence in Lancashire's transition to Labour, but in no other region were these two features exhibited to quite the same extent. In the North East and South Wales, for example, trades unionism was of comparable strength but the break from the established parties was slow to develop because of nonconformity and working class radicalism. In South Wales the Miners' Federation had about 150,000 members by the eve of the First World War but nonconformity was only slowly disappearing as an influence in working class life and was even boosted by a temporary revival in 1904-05. Moreover, the Liberal party appears to have expressed quite well working class opinion and, consequently, the rise of the Labour party was geared much more than in Lancashire to the slow transformation of deep rooted social features, among which the anglicisation of the workforce played its part, along with the process of rationalisation in the structure of colliery ownership. The political changes of significance took place

in South Wales during and after the First World War, not before. (4) ^{Wales 42} In Northumberland and Durham, where there was probably a higher incidence of trade unionists in the population than in Lancashire, Liberalism was as strong as in Wales and there was an old guard of miners' leaders who had been comparatively successful in arranging for labour representation with the Liberal party after 1885. This group bitterly opposed the forces of change, represented by the ILP, and there developed within the miners' ranks in the North East an influential socialist group in contrast with Lancashire, where the miners had always been able to allow the union leadership to express their political and industrial grievances. Whilst, therefore, socialism never became particularly strong among the Lancashire Miners the North Eastern coalfields by 1910 were "hotbeds of socialist activity." (5) ^{Wales 42}

The West of Scotland provides an interesting comparison with Lancashire. Irish immigration was heavy and, as in Lancashire, this helped to strengthen the Conservative party. It might therefore be thought that divisions of loyalty among trade unionists would render the pursuit of an independent Labour course attractive, especially since the Scottish Liberals were quite intractable on the question of co-operation with Labour candidates. During this period there were in fact many examples of Labour candidates fighting the two established

parties from an independent platform, though with little success.

The most important barrier to development lay in the weakness of the trade unions, especially in the mining industry, and their inability to win workers away from the Orange and Green struggle. Consequently the Labour party made slower headway than in Lancashire though the ILP was always stronger in the West of Scotland, a reflection of trade union weakness. (6)

9.11.1931
4112
9.11.1931

In some respects the strength of socialism in working class politics in Scotland was analogous to the position of the ILP among the textile workers of the West Riding. Here the socialists were active, and were able to install themselves in positions of influence, before the woollen textile trade unions became really strong and consequently working class action in local politics took a more directly socialist line than on the other side of the Pennines. (7)

For one area, London, we are able to make a more detailed comparison. (8) It would be difficult to imagine two regions so different from each other as London and Lancashire. Though each was equally weighty in its electoral significance (between them they accounted for over one fifth of the House of Commons' membership) they were sharply contrasted in their economic and social features. Whereas Lancashire embodied the traditional Victorian staple trades London possessed little heavy industry; it was a city of small workshops with a high proportion of professional people and far more socially diverse than Lancashire,

with its predominantly working class character. In London the social classes were already becoming segregated in their respective suburbs, a process that was only beginning to visit Lancashire in the cities of Manchester and Liverpool. London was, in fact, "more like the conurbation of the future than the city of the past." (9)¹³ It would, therefore, be stretching the imagination too far to expect the political history of these two regions to have followed a similar pattern and indeed they did not, each presenting a different model of Labour's emergence.

In parliamentary politics, however, London and Lancashire shared a common feature: the strength of the Conservative party. But, unlike Lancashire, the backbone of London's Toryism was middle class and although to some extent it relied on working class voting the dependence was less marked than in the North West. (10)¹⁴ In fact London voting patterns showed a more pronounced class basis than did Lancashire's and the battle for the working class vote was fought out in London between the Labour and the Liberal parties. Moreover, it appears that from the 1880's onwards London Liberalism was gradually withering away. The reasons were partly social, the segregation of the classes by residence causing working class communities to lose religious and political contact with middle class people. Since

the Liberal party relied heavily on middle class patrons for its funds it came to espouse policies that were more in line with the electoral demands of this class: " ... London Liberalism remained closer to Nonconformity than to working class radicalism." (11)⁴⁵ Although in the early 1890's and around 1906 the party made temporary revivals based on working class support these were largely of a parliamentary nature and were not substantiated by gains at local level. It might seem, therefore, that with the Liberal party gradually losing its grip on the working class voter and with Toryism entrenched in the wealthier suburbs, the Labour party was ideally placed to rise to prominence in London well before the First World War. Yet in 1906 London could produce only 3 LRC representatives, as against Lancashire's 13, whilst the London Labour party was not established until 1914. It seems that Lancashire, an "old fashioned" region in economic and social terms, moved into twentieth century politics more quickly than London, which was already beginning to "anticipate the pattern of development of most British cities in the 20th century." (12)² Why was this?

The explanation reveals the real difference between working class politics in the two regions. For one thing London was much more dominated by socialism, the socialism of the SDF and the Fabian Society especially. The SDF enjoyed some support but was not interested until a comparatively late stage in leading an independent party based on the working class and

consequently failed to exploit the true strength of the workers in politics. Not that this achieved the same dimensions as in Lancashire until the eve of the First World War because of the weakness of trade unionism. "London was never a trade union stronghold." (13) ¹³ Even after the new unionist upsurge after 1889 London trade union membership still compared unfavourably with that of Lancashire (14) ¹⁴ and it was not until 1914 that London possessed trade unions which could provide the funds and membership from which to sustain a Labour party. Here we may see how London's social structure, with its lack of working class homogeneity and community spirit - features readily fostered in the industrial centres of Lancashire - proved a disadvantage to the growth of the Labour party. Yet when socialism and trade unionism could be brought together London was perfectly capable of producing solidly based local Labour parties of a lasting nature, as the example of Woolwich shows. (15) ¹⁵ Woolwich Labour party was as impressive an organisation as the best equipped Lancashire parties of Manchester and Nelson and a great improvement on the purely trade union parties that sprang up in Lancashire during the years 1900 to 1906. So, although the weakness of trade unionism proved a hindrance to Labour development in London for many years the movement there was probably in a stronger position from which to grow by the eve of the First World War than it was in Lancashire, whose reliance on trade unions based on staple industries was to bring setbacks during the 1920's and 1930's.

The preceding narrative may have conveyed the impression that the Labour party was simply the product of a variety of local movements. But, of course, each region was responding to problems common to the entire country. There was clearly a general drift towards Labour politics throughout Britain in the thirty or so years before the First World War. The interesting feature, however, in discussing a movement like the Labour party lies in the interaction between national themes and local responses. It was this that accounted for the differing speeds of political change and the varied balance of forces within the movement from region to region. Any study of these processes must bring into focus all the local peculiarities of Victorian political society. There is no representative region.

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Plan

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B. Printed Sources

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 - (a) private
 - (b) public
- (ii) Newspapers and Periodicals
- (iii) Reference Material and Almanacs
- (iv) Diaries and Letters
- (v) Parliamentary Papers and other official reports
- (vi) Books and Pamphlets up to 1906

2. Secondary

- (i) General Works and Articles
- (ii) Biographies and Autobiographies
- (iii) Unpublished Theses

NOTE:

The following abbreviations are used in the bibliography:

- B.I.H.R. : Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research
- B.J.S. : British Journal of Sociology
- B.S.S.L.H. : Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History
- Econ.H.R. : Economic History Review
- E.H.R. : English Historical Review
- I.R.S.H. : International Review of Social History
- M.S. : Manchester School
- P. and P. : Past and Present
- T.H.S.L.C. : Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire
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- V.S. : Victorian Studies

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INTRODUCTION

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2. W. Cooke Taylor, Notes on a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire, 1842, 68.
3. John Saville, Ernest Jones, Chartist, 1952, 82.
4. See annual issues of the Co-operative Directory.
5. Quoted in Donald Read, The English Provinces, c 1760-1960, a Study in Influence, 1964.
6. In the 30 years after 1906 Labour parliamentary victories in Lancashire were as follows: 1910 (January) 12 and (December) 9; 1918, 14; 1922, 18; 1923, 23; 1924, 18; 1929, 42; 1931, 5; 1935, 18.
7. 2.2.1906.
8. Quoted in H. Clegg, A. Fox and A. F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, vol. 1, 1889-1910, 1964, 411.
9. The English Constitution, 2nd ed., 1872, vii.
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14. e.g., S. G. Hobson, Pilgrim to the Left, Memoirs of a Modern Revolutionist, 1938, 40. Joseph Clayton, The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 1884-1924, 1926, 81.
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16. e.g., see Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities, 1968 ed., 187,
17. Neal Blewett, "The Franchise in the United Kingdom, 1885-1918", Past and Present, 32, 1965.

18. It may be noted that newspaper reports of elections often provide the best guides to the social character of the electorate.
19. The best study is P. F. Clarke, Elections and the Electorate in North West England, 1900-1914 (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1967) Also useful is Grace A. Jones, National and Local Issues in Politics: a Study of East Sussex and the Lancashire Spinning Towns 1906-10 (unpublished D. Phil thesis, Sussex University, 1965).
20. A notable work is Frank Bealey's "The Northern Weavers, Independent Labour Representation and Clitheroe, 1902", Manchester School, 1957. P. F. Clarke's "British Politics and Blackburn Politics, 1900-10," Historical Journal, 12, 1969 is a welcome recent addition.
21. The most useful are: T. C. Barker and J. R. Harris, A Merseyside Town in the Industrial Revolution: St Helens, 1750-1900, 1954; J. D. Marshall, Furness and the Industrial Revolution, 1958; G. E. Diggle, A History of Widnes, 1961; L. P. Green, Provincial Metropolis: the Future of Local Government in South East Lancashire, 1958; Roy Millard, Lancashire: An Illustrated Essay on the History of the Landscape, 1955. The pamphlets of the Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association, produced between 1948 and 1951 and covering the different industrial districts in the region, are also most helpful.

Chapter 1

- 1 J. Holt, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster, 1795, 11.
- 2 A comparison of the Lancashire occupation patterns with the national average in 1916 shows:

Occupation	Nat. Ave. per 10,000	Lancs. Ave. per 10,000
Indoor Domestic	118	72
Commercial	486	441
Agriculture	835	587
Mining	739	1158
Metals	1050	891
Textiles	344	1983

(Source: E. Krehbiel "Geographic Influences in British Elections".
Geographic Review, Dec., 1916)

- 3 B. R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics, 1962, 179.
- 4 B. Bowker, Lancashire Under the Hammer, 1928, 19.
- 5 H. S. Jevons, The British Coal Trade, 1920, 2.
- 6 S. B. Saul, "House Building in England, 1890-1914", Economic History Review, 1962.
- 7 Freeman, Rodgers and Kinvig, Lancashire, Cheshire and the Isle of Man, 1966, 141.
- 8 T. C. Barker and J. R. Harris, A Merseyside Town in the Industrial Revolution: St. Helens, 1750-1900, 1954, 444-6.
- 9 Victoria County History of Lancashire, II, 1908, 434.
- 10 See pp 52-3.
- 11 See R. S. Sayers, A History of Economic Change in England, 1880-1939 1967, 32 table 5.
- 12 H. A. Turner, Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy, 1962, 41; Peter Mathias, The First Industrial Nation, 1969, 486 table 34.
- 13 Account from: R. Sayers, History of Economic Change in England, 100-103; Sidney Pollard, The Development of the British Economy 1914-1950, 1962, 12-13; P. L. Payne, "The Emergence of the Large

- 13 cont.
Scale Company in Great Britain, 1870-1914", Economic History Review, 1967
- 14 "The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch", Nineteenth Century, IX, 1881.
- 15 See David Buxton, "On the Rise of the Manufacturing Towns of Lancashire and Cheshire", Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 8, 1855-56. A. J. P. Taylor, "Manchester", Encounter, 42, 1957.
- 16 Patrick Geddes, Cities in Evolution, 1915, 31.
- 17 Emrys Jones, Towns and Cities, 1966, 64.
- 18 See Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1st Report 1885, c-4402, question 2979.
- 19 D. Caradog Jones (ed.), Social Survey of Merseyside, 1934, I, 33, 37 ff.
- 20 Shena D. Simon, A Century of City Government; Manchester, 1838-1938, 1938, 112.
- 21 Philip Snowden, An Autobiography, I, 1934, 96.
- 22 See Katherine Chorley, Manchester Made Them, 1950.
- 23 An exception to this was Burnley, notorious for the difficulty of union organising there. At the turn of the century there were over 100 small weaving firms operating in the town. See Cotton Factory Times, 27.2. 1903.
- 24 See the Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops, 1894, c-7745.
- 25 e.g., Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities, 1968 ed., 187.
- 26 See two contemporary studies of these attitudes: Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy, 1957; John H. Goldthorpe et al., The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour, 1968.
- 27 Quoted in Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities, 94.
- 28 Census of Great Britain, 1851. Religious Worship (England and Wales) Report and Tables, 1853.
- 29 K. S. Inglis, "Patterns of Religious Worship in 1851", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XI, 1960
- 30 cf. Frank Bealey and H. M. Pelling, Labour and Politics, 1900-1906 1958, 3.

- 31 W. Cooke Taylor, Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire, 1842, 297.
- 32 Hewgill's figures for the 3 main denominations were:
1851. Anglican 19.1%, Catholic 2.9% , Nonconformist 18.0%
1885 Anglican 17.0% , Catholic 4.1% , Nonconformist 21.4
(see Lancashire Congregational Calendar, 1885, 22-3)
- 33 The above figures may be compared with the Congregationalist figures for Lancashire produced by Dr. Kitson Clark (The Making of Victorian England, 1965 ed., 173) which attempted to illustrate the comparative growth rate of the various religious groups in terms of church accommodation in the late nineteenth century.
- 34 Nonconformist and Independent, 2 Feb., 2, 9 March, 1882.
- 35 J. D. Marshall, Furness and the Industrial Revolution, 1958, 360
- 36 Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1885, c-4402, 1st Report, questions 13329-13334.
- 37 see B. D. White, A History of the Corporation of Liverpool, 1835-1914, 1951, 140; Caradog-Jones, Social Survey of Merseyside, I, 112, 255, 260.
- 38 Shena Simon, A Century of City Government, 295-6
- 39 John Tatham's Report on the Health of Greater Manchester 1891-93 (Manchester 1894) should be read in conjunction with T. R. Marr's report The mortality rate for infants and adults over 25 was higher in Manchester than in England and Wales as a whole.
- 40 S. B. Saul, Economic History Review, 1962.
- 41 see the stimulating essay by H. M. Pelling in his Popular Politics in Late Victorian Society, 1969.
- 42 see Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy on working class culture; although the "them" and "us" mentality was strong it seemed to mark a grudging acceptance of authority rather than a revolutionary spirit.

CHAPTER 2

1. See A. J. Taylor, "Concentration and Specialization in the Lancashire Cotton Industry, 1825-1850", Economic History Review, 1949

2. Growth in Real Output (1834=100)

1845	1850	1860	1867	1870	1874	1878	1886
210	202	399	380	426	500	445	567

(Figures from M. Blaug, "Productivity of Capital in the Lancashire Cotton Industry during the Nineteenth Century", Economic History Review, 1961)

In terms of exports and imports of raw cotton and yarns and cloths, the growth was as follows:

Imported Raw Cotton (millions of lbs)		Exported Yarns and Cloths (£ mill)	
1816-20	139	20.4	(inflated value)
1851-55	172	31.8	
1876-80	1456	68.4	
1891-95	1746	66.2) considering fall in money
1896-1900	1798	66.4) values

(Figures from S. J. Chapman, Lancashire Cotton Industry, 1904, 144.)

3. See Table 5 and compare also Clegg, Fox and Thompson A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889, vol 1 1889 - 1910, (1964), 468
4. On the piecers' position in the late nineteenth century J. R. Clynes, himself a piecer at this time and later a prominent Labour politician, noted: "We were handicapped from the first because the Spinners' Union naturally wanted to keep the piecers within its own ranks and because in the nature of things, piecers do not remain in that employment long enough to bring age and experience to the aid of their union, normally becoming spinners themselves before middle age." (J. R. Clynes, Memoirs, I, 1937, 48.) In fact the most concerted effort to establish an independent union of piecers came at Bolton in 1890 under the auspices of the local S.D.F. Piecers' wages were quite low in Bolton Mills and the men concerned combined to form a "Lancashire Piecers' Association". The Bolton Spinners immediately retaliated by collecting subscriptions and promising improved conditions and pay for their assistants, whilst in many mills where piecers had actually gone on strike hands were quickly engaged (see Bolton Weekly Guardian, 20.9.90; Cotton Factory Times, 1.8.90 H. A. Turner, Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy, 1962, 142)
5. See Table 7
6. See E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, 1963, 269-271.
7. Handloom weavers had outnumbered power loom weavers by 2 : 1 in 1834 but the total number of handlooms dropped from about 240,000, after the

7 cont.

- Napoleonic Wars, to around 60,000 in the 1840's. The number of power looms leapt from 14-15,000 to 225,000 during the same period. (see A. J. Taylor, Economic History Review, 1949)
8. M. Blaug, Economic History Review, 1961
9. Webb Trade Union Collection...A. XXXiV, 2, 146 ff.
10. *ibid.*
11. H. A. Turner, Trade Union Growth....., 136
12. The Spinners' Annual Report for 1879-80 records, for instance, the following benefits: out of work, accident, dispute, victimisation, funeral, superannuation, removal of members' goods, lock-out, fires and failures, breakdown and stoppage, sickness, emigration and leaving trade.
13. There was no uniform list for the spinning trade until 1949. (H. A. Turner, Trade Union Growth, 129)
14. e.g. Cotton Factory Times, 3.7.85
15. *ibid.* 10.7.85
16. *ibid.* 23.10.85
17. *ibid.*
18. Spinners' Amalgamation, Annual Report, 1886
19. H. A. Turner, Trade Union Growth, 374-5
20. e.g. Cotton Factory Times, 14.8.85
21. Trade Union Growth, 129
22. This Association was established in 1858 to cover north east Lancashire. It later came to be referred to as the "First Amalgamation" and maintained its existence until 1903 although for the previous twenty years its functions had been practically superseded by the Second Amalgamation of 1884.
23. S. & B Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 309
24. quoted by S. J. Chapman, Lancashire Cotton Industry, 265
25. During the 1860's lists were fixed at Preston (1860), Chorley (1861), Bolton (1861) Nelson (1866) Hyde (1867) and Blackburn (1853 and 1867).

26. It caused unrest throughout Lancashire. At Blackburn, the worst hit town, mobs roamed the streets looting, burning and attacking mill owners (See e.g., G. C. Miller, Blackburn: the Evolution of a Cotton Town, 1951, 144-9)
27. Weavers Amalgamation Minute Book, 17.5.84
28. *ibid.* 3-5.5.84; 17.5.84 (The present name "Amalgamated Weavers' Association" was adopted in 1907)
29. Weavers Revised Rules, 1889
30. see Cotton Factory Times, 4.1.95; 19.1.1906. Also Walter Bennett, A History of Burnley, 1951, vol IV, 128
31. Cotton Factory Times, 21.7.1905
32. Between 1886 and 1906 the loom ratio was 3.4. Attempts to increase the number of looms to each weaver actually led to a county lock-out as late as 1931. On loom ratio see G. H. Wood, The History of Wages in the Cotton Trade during the Past 100 Years, 1910, 30)
33. See Cotton Factory Times, 9.7.86.
34. One local society, Great Harwood Weavers, withdrew from the Amalgamation as a protest over the Uniform List, which involved a slight reduction of wages in that area. (Cotton Factory Times, 3.6.92)
35. See Table 6
36. There were complaints in the mid 1880's that employers were shamelessly reducing wages so that men could earn no more than twenty shillings a week in the cardrooms, and women hardly sixteen shillings. (Cotton Factory Times, 19.3.86; 26.8.87) Attempts were also being made to combine duties, for instance to make strippers and grinders do the work of bobbin carriers also.
37. Unions which had been in existence during the 1830's do not seem to have survived to the later nineteenth century. (see Chapman, Lancashire Cotton Industry, 232-3 n.3 and Manchester Guardian Commercial, 10.4.1930)
38. Cotton Factory Times, 23.4.86
39. Cardroom Amalgamation, Rules, 1888
40. Cardroom Amalgamation, Report, 27.12.90
41. *ibid.* 26.9.91
42. *ibid.* 28.3.91
43. Cotton Factory Times, 22.1.92
44. See Table 5 and After 50 Years (1936), an official booklet issued by the Cardroom Amalgamation to mark its golden jubilee celebration.

45. See Cotton Factory Times, 1.8.90
46. Cardroom Amalgamation, Report, 27.6.91
47. Webb Trade Union Collection A, XXXIV, 2, 216-8. The Central treasury was to pay to those who came out in support, not to the original disputants and therefore this scheme did not really solve the Cardroom Amalgamation's problem of funds for independent strike action.
48. Spinners' Amalgamation, Report, 7.7.90, 31.12.92 and also 30.4.93, 31.10.93
49. On this problem union leaders were apt to lay blame at the door of foreign competition, which caused employers to want to increase output. See e.g., James Mawdsley's evidence to the Royal Commission on Labour; Group C, Vol 1, Questions 735-6.
50. Elijah Helm, "The Recent Wages Dispute in the Lancashire Cotton Spinning Industry", Economic Journal, III, 1893
51. *ibid.*
52. Cardroom Amalgamation, Report, 24.9.92
53. See Workmen's Times, 17.12.92. Mullin received donations from Lady Dilke, R. W. Hudson, (the soap magnate), the Boot and Shoe Operatives, the Carpenters and Joiners and the Lancashire Miners. (Cardroom Amalgamation, Report, 24.12.92) The Weavers also contributed £500; (Weavers' Minute Book, 17.12.92)
54. For details of the negotiations see S & B Webb, Industrial Democracy, I, 200-203 and Sir Charles W. Macara, Recollections, 1921, 20-26.
55. Cardroom Amalgamation, Report 21.12.93. Their next major wage advances did not come until 1899-1900.
56. Spinners' Amalgamation, Annual Report, 1895
57. S & B Webb, Industrial Democracy, II, 474
58. See Cotton Factory Times, 8.11.95
59. Cardroom Amalgamation, Report, 22.7.93
60. Economic Journal 1893
61. e.g. G. von Schulze Gaevernitz: "at the present day it can only be compared in significance with such a trade as the collective iron industry in all its branches." (Social Peace; a Study of the Trade Union Movement in England, 1893, 143)
62. Thomas Ellison, The Cotton Trade of Great Britain, 1886, 103.

63. Ring Spinners, mostly women, were at this time recruited by the Cardroom Amalgamation, hence its "Ring Room" interests in the Association's full title - Card, Blowing and Ring Room Operatives.
64. Cotton Factory Times, 8.7.87
65. *ibid.*
66. *ibid.*, 3.5.89
67. Accouncement in the Labour Annual, 1896, 20
68. 27.3.85
69. Report of the Deputation to the Marquis of Salisbury, G. J. Goschen and A. J. Balfour; May 11th 1892: pamphlet in Manchester Central Library
70. Annual Register, 1893, 63
71. There was Allan Gee, Ben Turner and W. H. Drew - socialists of the West Riding textile unions; Thomas Greenall a Lancashire miners' official and a member of the I.L.P.; moderates such as W. H. Wilkinson and William Mullin; and the Conservative, James Mawdsley. (see Leslie Bather, History of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Manchester University, 1956)
72. Bimetallism was flatly and finally rejected by the T.U.C. in 1898. (Annual Report, 1898, 76) Since in 1893 India had gone onto the Gold Standard, the appeal of bimetallism naturally lost some of its effect.
73. Peter Harnetty, Economic History Review, XVIII, 1965.
74. 31.5.95
75. See E. H. Fowler, The Life of H. H. Fowler, First Viscount Wolverhampton 1912, 332, 335.
76. Cardroom Amalgamation Report, 22.3.95
77. Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership, 1948 ed., 24
78. Royal Commission on Labour, First Report, Group C, vol. 1, Question 1648; also questions 38-47, 846, 896.
79. Interview printed in Burnley Gazette, 1.8.94
80. See Table 5
81. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions, 468
82. S & B Webb, A History of Trade Unionism, 427
83. Royal Commission on Labour, First Report, Group C, vol 1, Questions 706 824-9, 1731.

84. c.f. Roy Gregory, the Miners and British Politics, 1906-1914, (1968)

CHAPTER 3

- 1 e.g., at the beginning of the twentieth century England's deepest mine was in Lancashire - at the Pendleton Colliery, Manchester. (Victoria County History of Lancashire, Vol. 2 1908, 359).
- 2 A report on hours and wages submitted to a national conference of miners in 1886 showed that Lancashire, in general, worked longer hours for lower pay. The average shift length in the coalfield was 9 or 9½ hours for average daily earnings of under five shillings. Conditions were shown to be better in the coalfields of Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Cumberland. Lancashire wages were higher than in the remainder of the coalfields only because of the longer shifts worked. (Reports of Delegates to National Miners' Conference, 1886; L.C.M.F., 1886).
- 3 see Table 8
- 4 Account from: T. W Freeman, H. B Rodgers and R. H. Kinvig, Lancashire, Cheshire and the Isle of Man, 1966, 9-17, 128-135. N. Simpkin, "The Lancashire Coalfield", Institute of Fuel, Wartime Bulletin, December 1945. H. S. Jevons, The British Coal Trade, 1920, 73-4. A. J. Taylor, "Labour Productivity and Technological Innovation in the British Coal Industry, 1850-1914", Economic History Review, 1961-2.
- 5 see Roy Gregory, The Miners and British Politics, 1906-1914, 1968, 55-56
- 6 *ibid.*, 59.
- 7 see List of Mines Worked 1888, and 1900; (Home Office, 1889, 1901).
- 8 see Table 1.
- 9 see Table 3.
- 10 Gregory, Miners and British Politics, 3.
- 11 Ferdynand Zweig, Men in the Pits, 1948, 23.
- 12 A miner would never have worked consistently at his utmost capacity or his health would quickly have suffered. Immigrants are likely to appear to be working harder, because new to the job and less experienced, and thus bring the attention of the colliery manager to the apparent slowness of the other miners. For a discussion of the complexities of this problem in present day conditions see Clancy Sigal's Weekend in Dinlock, 1962, 25-27.

- 13 Account from: R. Page Arnot, The Miners, 1949, 52-62.
G. D. H. Cole, "Some Notes on British Trade Unionism in the Third Quarter of the Nineteenth Century", in E. M. Carus-Wilson (ed.) Essays in Economic History, vol 3, and also in International Review for Social History, 1937
- 14 quoted in R. Page Arnot, The Miners, Years of Struggle, 1953, 21. See also the same author's The Miners, 63-65 and Who Was Who, 1916-1928 (1929)
- 15 Page Arnot, The Miners 62.
- 16 Thomas Ashton, Three Big Strikes in the Coal Industry, n.d., c 1925, vol. 1, 7. The original constituents were Ashton under Lyne, Oldham, Tyldesley, Leigh, Skelmersdale, Worlsey, Little Hulton, Atherton, St Helens, Hindley, Radcliffe, and Bolton. Wigan did not join.
- 17 Page Arnot, The Miners, 64.
- 18 These advances were not necessarily county-wide.
- 19 Page Arnot, The Miners, 64
20. In fact both sides of industry were agreeing to co-operate in defence of the trade. In exporting districts like Durham and Northumberland a strike over wages might mean loss of markets to foreign producers; even in normal conditions prices for exported coal fluctuated keenly.
- 21 Webb Trade Union Collection, A, xxvii, (i), 30-31.
- 22 *ibid.*, A, xxvii, (i), 6.
- 23 quoted in J. E. Williams, The Derbyshire Miners, 1962, 291
- 24 see Webb Collection, A, xxvii, (i), 57; J. E. Williams, *op. cit.*, 257.
- 25 Webb Collection, A, xxvii, (i), 47.
- 26 *ibid.*, A, xxvii, (i), 14.
- 27 *ibid.*, A, xxvii, (i), 17-20
- 28 Wigan Observer, 3.1.85.
- 29 Webb Collection, A, xxvii, (i), 21.
- 30 Page Arnot, The Miners 72.
- 31 L.C.M.F., 25.5; 29.11.86. Webb Collection, A, xxvii, (i), 6. On

31 continued.

negotiations at/^alocal colliery see, e.g., D. Anderson, "Blundell's Collieries: Wages, Disputes and Conditions of Work." Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 117, 1965.

32 Verified by the Board of Trade, Labour Department, Abstract of Labour Statistics, 1893-94, c - 7565.

33 L.C.M.F., 29.6.87.

34. *ibid.*, 27.6.87.

35 R. Page Arnot's estimate of 50,000 Lancashire miners represented at a national conference in 1889 includes only 22,000 union members. (The Miners, 100)

36 L.C.M.F., 21.6.86.

37 Shortly after the formation of the Federation there were 16 branches, ranging from the biggest - Ashton under Lyne, and Oldham, Ashton and Haydock, and Wordley and Little Hulton - with over 1,000 members, to the small ones such as Atherton, Little Lever and Platt Bridge, with little over a hundred, and sometimes less.

38 L.C.M.F., 16.11.86. North Staffordshire "ceased to be regarded" as part of the Federation because in arrears with its subscriptions.

39 See table 9.

40 T. Ashton, Three Big Strikes, I, 46

41 see his Visions of the Mine: Sketches of Real Life at Our Collieries, (1891)

42 T. C. Barker and J. R. Harris, A Merseyside Town in the Industrial Revolution: St Helens, 1750-1900, (1954), 457 n.2

43 R. Page Arnot, The Miners, 76. See also William Hallam, Miners' Leaders, (1894)

44 e.g., Book of Price Lists and Letters (Ms Book, n.d., c 1886) at the offices of the N.U.M., Bolton.

45 L.C.M.F., 16.11.86.

46 see The Miners, Chapter 3, 4.

47 Notice circulated by Ashton, L.C.M.F., August 1888.

- 48 Page Arnot, The Miners 114.
- 49 Webb Trade Union Collection, A, xxvii, (i), 14,22.
- 50 Page Arnot, op. cit., 115.
- 51 *ibid.*, 259.
- 52 In 1890 Thomas Ashton prepared a report on shift lengths in Lancashire pits. It showed that in the majority of the 169 pits investigated a shift of over 8 hours was worked. Miners in one pit were shown to work to ^A12 hour day, and in two others an 11 hour day. 160 pits worked between 8 and 10½ hour shifts; in only six pits was the shift less than 7½ hours. (see Workman's Times, 31.10.90).
- 53 Webb Trade Union Collection, A,xxvii, (i), 11-12, 48. L.C.M.F., 31.1.87.
- 54 *ibid.*, 3.1.87 and Thomas Ashton, Three Big Strikes, I, 50.
- 55 Webb Collection, A, xxvii, (i), 11-12.
- 56 See J. Williams and B. McCormick, "The Miners and the Eight Hour Day, 1863-1910, Economic History Review, xii, 1959.
- 57 e.g., Lancashire had a majority of its miners in favour of legislation when the Newport conference took place in November 1889.
- 58 see F. Zweig, Men in the Pits, chapters xii, xiv.
- 59 Royal Commission on Labour, 1st Report, 1892, Group A, vol 1, question 6061.
- 60 See speech of Thomas Aspinwall, Trade Union Congress, Annual Report 1889, 58.
- 61 *ibid.*
- 62 The employers had no respect for the plea for regularity of hours. Their main aim was to gain maximum efficiency in output with minimum production costs. They disliked the expensive system of closing mines at regular hours and would have preferred to work long shifts for awhile and then close down completely for a short time. For this reason a 48 hour week would have given him greater flexibility than an 8 hour day.
- 63 see p.204
- 64 Originally established in 1843, although it does not appear to have been used at all since that time.

- 65 See, e.g., Royal Commission on Labour, 1st Report, 1892, Group A vol 1, 30 and questions 5828-5833.
- 66 L.C.M.F., records are not available for the period 1889-1892.
- 67 It was estimated that the daily earnings of a collier in west Lancashire, after all deductions, had risen from 5s. 6d. to 7s. 2½d. a day during the period 1887 to 1892. In east Lancashire wages were sometimes as high as 11s. 9½d. a day. (Royal Commission on Labour, 1st Report, 1892, Group A, vol 1, 30).
- 68 e.g., L.C.M.F., 11.3.93.
- 69 *ibid.*, 7.1.93. Ashton's circular noted of non-unionists that "such men must have a knowledge of the benefits they themselves are reaping which have been obtained solely by the Miners' Union."
- 70 Quoted in R Page Arnot, The Miners, 205.
- 71 St Helens Newspaper and Advertiser, 19.3.92.
- 72 e.g., interview with Thomas Glover, *ibid.*, 19.3.92.
- 73 L.C.M.F., 27.2.93.
- 74 Page Arnot, *op cit.*, 223.
- 75 LCMF., 1.8.93. Thomas Ashton, Three Big Strikes, I, 239. The amount collected was £279.
- 76 D. Anderson, "Blundell's Collieries: Wages, Disputes and Conditions of Work," Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 117, 1965.
- 77 see pp 208-9.
- 78 M.F.G.B., Annual Proceedings, 9.8.93.

79	QUESTION	M.F.G.B.	L.C.M.F.
1	Will you agree to a 25 p.c. reduction.	F. 221 A. 43,695	14 23,263
2	Will you accept offer of arbitration	F. 383 A. 139,587	18 22,680
3	Shall men resume work who can do so at old rate of wages	F. 61,923 A. 91,369	5,203 20,501

(M.F.G.B., Annual Proceedings, 14-15.9.93.
L.C.M.F., 13.9.93).

- 80 M.F.G.B., Annual Proceedings, 29.9.93.
- 81 ibid., 12-13.10.93. Thomas Ashton, Three Big Strikes, I, 240.
- 82 M.F.G.B., 17.11.93.
- 83 D. Anderson, Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancs. and Chesh., 117, 1965.
- 84 See J. E. Williams, "Mil. itancy among the British Coalminers, 1890 - 1914", Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 13, 1966.

CHAPTER 4

- 1 See Tables 2 and 3.
- 2 cf P. R. Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour: the Struggle for London, 1885-1914, 1967, Chapter 1.
- 3 Lord Egerton of Tatton, "The Manchester Ship Canal", Nineteenth Century, xxxv, 1894.
- 4 see N. J. Frangopulo (ed), Rich Inheritance; A Guide to the History of Manchester, 1962.
- 5 Freeman, Rodgers and Kinvig, Lancashire, Cheshire and the Isle of Man, 1966, 114.
- 6 Widnes began to concentrate on acids and metallurgical products, thus ensuring its survival as a chemical town. See G. E. Diggle, A History of Widnes, 1961, especially pp 77-85.
- 7 T. C. Barker and J. R. Harris, A Merseyside Town in the Industrial Revolution, 439-451; T. C. Barker, Pilkington Brothers and the Glass Industry, 1960, chapters 9 and 10.
- 8 Freeman, Rodgers and Kinvig, op. cit., 186.
- 9 e.g. the railwaymen, whose principal union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, had been established in 1872 but covered only a small percentage of the operational railway staff. In 1889 the General Railway Workers' Union recruiting chiefly from the lower grades, was set up.
- 10 A. E. P. Duffy, "New Unions in Britain: A Reappraisal", Economic History Review, xiv, 1961.
- 11 The Cardroom Amalgamation (1886) and the Miners Federation of Great Britain (1889) are not here considered as new unions since both had a tradition of unionisation in their respective trades and had little in common with the methods and policies of other new unions.
- 12 Clegg, Fox and Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions, 55.
- 13 Justice, 10.11.88; 14.9.89.
- 14 James Sexton, Sir James Sexton, Agitator, 1936, 93.
- 15 Barker and Harris, op. cit., 457.
- 16 Royal Commission on Labour, 1st Report 1892, Group C, vol 2. Evidence of P. J. King.

- 17 James Sexton, op. cit., 94.
- 18 ibid., 102-4.
- 19 Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op. cit., 70-71.
- 20 Royal Commission on Labour, 1st Report, 1892, Group B, vol. 2. Questions, 13,573 - 13,630; evidence of James Sexton. Workman's Times, 19.9; 24.10.90.
- 21 Will Thorne, My Life's Battles, 1934, 112-114.
- 22 Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op. cit., 67.
- 23 Workman's Times, 4.9.91.
- 24 T. C. Barker, Pilkington Brothers and the Glass Industry, 179.
- 25 Workman's Times, 14.11.90.
- 26 ibid., 5.12.90.
- 27 ibid., 12.9; 10.10.90.
- 28 ibid., 26.9; 24, 31.10; 14.11.90.
- 29 ibid., 2.1.92.
- 30 ibid., 5.9.90.
- 31 ibid., 21.11.91.
- 32 ibid., 16.1.92.
- 33 By this process the union members were supposed to adjust their work rate to that of the non-unionists. The ability of union members to work more quickly was not entirely proven.
- 34 Sexton, op cit., 102-104.
- 35 The conciliation board was composed of members of the local Trades Council and the Chamber of Commerce. See Manchester Guardian, 29.5; 10,13, 17.6.95.
- 36 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1893, 1894, 3.
- 37 On the creation of the Lancashire Labour Amalgamation see Workman's Times, 9.1.92. For details of Hall's career: Labour Prophet, Feb., 1894 and E. P. Thompson, William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary, 1955, 652.

- 38 Hall had been a member of the Fabian Society but joined the Manchester I.L.P. soon after its foundation in 1892. His conduct over the secession from Ward's Navvies was called into question by some of the Navvies' Union former members, who also doubted Hall's political integrity. After the secession of Hall's group Ward claimed that a certain (small) amount of money was missing from the Navvies' funds, as well as some office property. In fact Hall had expropriated the money to use for the Lancashire Labour Amalgamation, claiming that since Lancashire members of the Navvies' Union had always paid an extra 6d levy, known as a "district fund", for special local purposes, his members were entitled to take what was their own. The dispute did not improve the already strained relations between Hall and Ward, but, more important, it created enmity between some members and Hall himself, whose popularity declined through what was considered to be a high-handed attitude. (see the details of an enquiry made by the I.L.P. in the National Administrative Council Minute Book, 17.11; 4. 14. 15.12.94.)
- 39 The name of the union was changed by Fox to the British Labour Amalgamation.
- 40 P. C. Hoffman, They Also Serve, The Story of the Shopworkers, 1949, 51.
- 41 Bolton United Trades Council, 25th and 30th Annual Reports, 1891, 1896.
- 42 See Table 10.
- 43 Beamers', Twisters' and Drawers' Amalgamated Association, Half Yearly Report, June 1891.
- 44 Bolton Trades Council, 26th Annual Report, 1892.
- 45 See E. J. Hobsbawm, "General Labour Unions in Britain, 1889-1914", Economic History Review, 1948-49.
- 46 *ibid.*
- 47 e.g., the Gasworkers of Lancashire, under Clynes' influence, attempted to bring the unorganised doubling mill workers of Derbyshire into their union. (H. A. Clegg, General Union: A Study of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, 1954, 4.) See also Workman's Times, 20.2.92.
- 48 Workman's Times, 4.9.91.
- 49 *ibid.*, 31.7.91.
- 50 T.U.C., Annual Report, 1892, 53.
- 51 E. J. Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*

- 52 Workman's Times, 7.11.91.
- 53 see p.241 ff.
- 54 Workman's Times, 4.9.91.
- 55 Edward George, From Mill Boy to Minister, (n.d., c 1918), 37.
- 56 George, op. cit., J. R. Clynes, Memoirs, 1869-1924, 1937; Will Thorne, My Life's Battles, 114-115.
- 57 Workman's Times, 12.11.92.
- 58 eg, T.U.C., Annual Report, 1892, 70; 1893, 88.
- 59 Workman's Times, 3.4.91.
- 60 see pp273-4. There is an interesting contrast between the Trades Councils of Lancashire and those of Yorkshire. In the West Riding the socialists were able to infuse new life into the trades councils with no opposition from the older unions (see E. P. Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", in A. Briggs and J. Saville (ed), Essays in Labour History.) In Lancashire the trades councils, especially those in the cotton towns, offered no hope to socialists and new unionists since they had long been dominated by the old unions' officials. A good example is the Bury Trades Council: see its Annual Report for 1891.
- 61 Oldham Trades Council, Annual Reports for 1888, 1891.
- 62 Leslie Bather, A History of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, (unpublished PhD. Thesis, University of Manchester, 1956.)
- 63 Workman's Times, 5.9.90
- 64 Davies admitted that the Council was composed of "old trade unionists" (T.U.C. Annual Report, 1890, 50) but the only real obstructionist on the executive of the Council was Richard Watters of the Typographical Association (see Workman's Times, 26.9.90).
- 65 Workman's Times, 24.10.90.
- 66 ibid., 3.4.91.
- 67 ibid., 21.3.91.
- 68 ibid., 7.8.91.
- 69 ibid., 24.10.90.
- 70 ibid., 28.8.91.

- 71 Account from Workman's Times, 21.8.91.
- 72 Yet the radical John Kelly of the Carters, who had declared that neither political party "cared three ha' porth of common gin" for the working man, (Workman's Times, 18.9.91) was soon fighting for liberalism against the socialists.
- 73 Workman's Times, 11.9.91 and Manchester Guardian 3.11.91.
- 74 Workman's Times, 5.3.92 and Chapter 8, for a fuller discussion.
- 75 See A. M. McBriar, Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918, 1962, 180.
- 76 Account in A. Thompson, Here I Lie, the Memorial of an Old Journalist, 1937, 88; C. H. Herford, Philip Henry Wickstead, His Life and Work, 1931, 227 n.1. The meeting appears to have been attended also by Labour Church figures.
- 77 Workman's Times, 28.5.92. The platform at this meeting included many leading independent politicians, such as Blatchford, John Trevor (Labour Church), William Johnson (Shop Assistants) J. P. Quinn (Trades Council and Tailors) Leonard Hall, T. Purves, W. K. Hall and G. Evans (all S.D.F.) and Alf Settle.
- 78 See Table 10.
- 79 See p. 270

Chapter 5

1. see P W Campbell and A H Birch, "Politics in the North West", Manchester School, 18, 1950.
2. Jean Blondel, Voters, Parties and Leaders, (1967 ed.), 21.
3. "Lancashire" here means the 54 constituencies in the most heavily industrialised part of the North West. They include all the seats in the county of Lancashire except Blackpool, Lancaster and North Lonsdale, which were primarily agricultural and residential. Barrow-in-Furness is included, though geographically rather isolated from the rest, as are Hyde and Birkenhead, administratively part of Cheshire. The entire area had a population of some $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions, or roughly 10% of the national electorate.
4. see Table 13.
5. The highest polls most frequently occurred in the cotton towns of east Lancashire, possibly because of the social character of the district rather than anticipated closeness in the poll. (see Campbell and Birch, Manchester School, 18, 1950.)
6. For observations on working class voting habits in London, where distances between work and home tended to be greater, see P R Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour, 1967, 72
7. Campbell and Birch, op.cit.
8. See Table 14.
9. quoted by John Morley, Life of W E Gladstone, (1907 ed.), II, 486
10. H M Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 1885-1910, 1967, 415.
11. 377 county seats, 284 borough seats, 9 university seats.
12. see J P D Dunbabin, "Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain, 1868-1900: a Psephological Note", English Historical Review, 1966.
13. Paul Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform, 1967, 319.
14. see Tables 14 and 17 and Map 9.
15. H M Pelling, Social Geography of British Election, 415, Table 52.
16. Discussed at greater length in Chapter 12.
17. see Maps 10 and 11.

18. C H D Howard "The Parnell Manifesto and the Schools Question",
English Historical Review, 1947
19. C H D Howard, "Joseph Chamberlain and the Unauthorised Programme",
ibid. 1950.
20. see e.g., Wigan Observer 22.7.85.
21. his questionnaire to candidates: printed in Blackburn Times 7.11.85.
22. Preston Guardian 21.11.85.
23. There had been considerable support among Preston working men for the
"Fair Trade" campaign of the former Conservative M.P. for Preston,
W F Ecroyd. His protectionist plans against economic depression were not
official Conservative party policy but when Ecroyd visited Preston in
1885 he was proclaimed by the local Working Men's Club as "a model
employer of labour" and a "vigilant guardian of English industrial
supremacy." (see Preston Guardian, 11.11.85.)
25. Blackburn Standard, 29.8.85.
26. J G Shaw, The History and Traditions of Darwen and its People (1889), 186.
27. Blackburn Times 11.11.85.
28. John Denvir, The Irish in Britain (1892), 435.
29. See Stanley Salvidge, Salvidge of Liverpool; Behind the Political Scene
1890-1928 (1934) and R S Churchill, Lord Derby, King of Lancashire (1959)
30. Speech of A Salvidge on visit of A J Balfour to Liverpool, 1903.
(Salvidge of Liverpool, 44-5).
31. John Denvir, The Life Story of an Old Rebel (1910) 229. H M Pelling.
Social Geography of British Elections, 248.
32. The Irish vote was so strong in Scotland that the division was able to
return an Irish Nationalist M.P. at successive elections from 1885 to
1929 (see Pelling, op.cit., 249)
33. Wigan Observer, 22.11.85. and T P O'Connor, The Parnell Movement (1886),
550-1.
34. C H D Howard in English Historical Review, 1947.

35. see Leigh Chronicle, 5.7.95; John Lunn, Leigh, the Historical Past of a Lancashire Borough (1958), 266, 270, 278.
36. according to Philip Snowden, the I.L.P. speaker of the 1890's and later M.P. for Blackburn, whose family was one of the displaced immigrant groups that settled in Nelson. (see Colin Cross, Philip Snowden (1966), 25).
37. Burnley Radical, 8.1.87.
38. Preston Guardian, 31.10.85.
39. See The Liberal and Radical Yearbook and Statesman's Encyclopaedia, 1887.
40. See John Bateman, The Great Landowners of Gt. Britain & Ireland (1883), R S Churchill, Lord Derby, King of Lancashire (1959), 97, and H J Hanham Elections & Party Management: Politics in the time of Disraeli & Gladstone (1959), 80.
41. H J Hanham, Elections and Party Management, 80.
42. Chorley Guardian, 31.10.85, 5.12.85.
43. H M Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 250-1, 269.
44. *ibid.*, 278-9.
45. Manchester Guardian, 23.11.85.
46. *ibid.*, 17, 19, 20, 25, 11.85.
47. H J Hanham, Elections and Party Management, 321-2.
48. James Cornford, "The Transformation of Conservatism in the late Nineteenth Century", Victorian Studies, Sept. 1963.
49. The Liberals lost good candidates at Darwen (J G Potter) and Blackburn (W E Briggs). Briggs had intimated in 1885 that he might not be able to pledge himself on Home Rule (Blackburn Times, 15.8.85.)
50. Preston Guardian , 17.4.86.
51. Hartington received letters of support from W E Briggs and J G Potter, both Liberal candidates in 1885, and Robert Needham Phillips, erstwhile Liberal M.P. for Bury, (Preston Guardian, 28.4.86.)
52. Philip Magnus, Gladstone (1963 ed.), 347.
53. G R (Lord) Askwith, Lord James of Hereford (1930), 165.
54. *ibid.*, 185.

55. Preston Guardian. 26.6.86. James Greenwood was an autocratic local Liberal who, though later described by H M Hyndman of the S.D.F. as "the Napoleon of Burnley" (Further Reminiscences, (1912), 65-6), probably lacked the personality to become a good parliamentary candidate. (also Preston Guardian, 12.6.86.)
56. Rossendale Free Press, 2.1.92.
57. See J P D Dunbabin, "Parliamentary Elections in Gt. Britain, 1868-1900" English Historical Review, 1966.
58. H M Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 415, Table 52.
59. See Table 17.
60. Liverpool Daily Post, 10.1.87., 27.1.87.
61. *ibid.*, 20.1.87.
62. Queen Victoria commented: "the Stanleys think people were over confident about Liverpool and did not work hard enough." (quoted in M C Hurst, Joseph Chamberlain and the Liberal Re-Union (1967), 247, n.1.)
63. Liverpool Daily Post, 27.1.87.
64. See **Chapter 7**, *passim*.
65. See p. 273, 277-9.
66. J R Clynes, Memoirs (1937), vol. 1, 69.
67. M C Hurst, Joseph Chamberlain and the Liberal Re-Union (1967), 313, 346-7.
68. Burnley Mid-Weekly Gazette, 16.2.87.
69. Burnley Mid Weekly Gazette, 16.23.2.87. John Denvir, The Irish in Britain, 325, 328. Slagg relinquished his seat in 1889 owing to ill-health and another radical, J S Balfour, was elected in his place; (see Burnley Express 10.12.90).
70. Workman's Times 7.11.90.
71. Eccles Advertiser, 17.10.90., and J Brierley Watson, The Member for Eccles (Eccles and District History Society pamphlet, 1964).
72. Annual Register, 1890, 202.

73. John Denvir, Life Story of an Old Rebel, 239-41. And also Rossendale Free Press, 2.1.92, Bury Times 23.1.92.
74. Rossendale Free Press 9.1.92.
75. *ibid.*, 16.1.92., Denvir, *op.cit.*, 239-41.
76. Rossendale Free Press, 2.1.92..
77. *ibid.*, 30.1.92.
78. Annual Register, 1892, 6.
79. see John Morley, Life of W E Gladstone (1907 ed.), vol.2., 702.
80. Philip Magnus, Gladstone (1963 ed.), 396.
81. see pp 208-9.
82. J D Marshall, Furness and the Industrial Revolution (1958), 398.
83. L E Mather (ed.), The Right Honourable Sir William Mather, 1838-1920 (1925), 155.6.
84. See ch. 8 The U.T.F.W.A. had thanked James at a public meeting for his help in negotiating the 1891 Factory Act, but this move brought accusations from some radical and socialist workers that the cotton unions were displaying Conservative sympathies. (Bury Times, 8.6.92., 2.7.92.)
85. *ibid.*
86. Bury Times, 2.4.92., 4.6.92.
87. Lord Askwith, Lord James of Hereford, 228.
88. *ibid.*, 226-7.
89. Liverpool Daily Post, 6.7.92.
90. John Denvir, The Irish in Britain, 430
91. Widnes Examiner, 16.7.92.
92. G E Diggle, A History of Widnes (1961), 83-4.
93. Darwen Post, 9.7.92.
94. *ibid.*, 16.7.92.
95. *ibid.*, 25.6.92.

96. Morley, Life of Gladstone, II, 744.
97. Accrington Observer and Times, 16.12.93.
98. The Liberal majority fell from 947 in 1892 to 258. The election was fought on the old register.
99. Annual Register, 1893, 299-300.
100. Birkenhead and Cheshire Advertiser, 29.9.94.
101. H M Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 251.
102. Independent Labour Party, National Administrative Council Minute Book, 10.9.94. (London School of Economics).
103. Birkenhead and Cheshire Advertiser. 29.9.94.
104. *ibid.*, 20.10.94.
105. Asquith (1967 ed.), 95.
106. *ibid.*, 89.
107. see biography in Liberal Yearbook, 1905.
108. Bolton Chronicle, 6.7.95, 20.7.95.
109. quoted by P Harnetty, "The Indian Cotton Duties Controversy, 1894-96", English Historical Review, 1962.
110. e.g., Oldham Daily Standard, 9.1.95., 12.2.95.
111. see p. 54
112. Oldham Daily Standard, 12.2.95., 25.2.95.
113. *ibid.*, 5.7.95.
114. *ibid.*, 5.7.95.
115. *ibid.*
116. *ibid.*, 16.7.95.
117. Rochdale Observer, 6.7.95.

118. Potter was a fighting radical who provided a link with the town's famous days; he had replaced Cobden as M.P. in 1865. "No Liberal has been stronger in fibre or has shown less inclination to barter with principle." (Rochdale Observer, 9.1.95.)
119. *ibid.*, 19.1.95.
120. Rochdale Star, 8.7.95. (The Star calculated that Barnes' poll was not heavy enough, however, among Liberals to have upset Bright's chances; 12.7.95.)
121. Lord George Hamilton, the Conservative Indian Secretary, reduced, though did not abolish, the tariffs. He claimed to base his decision on the "extraordinary quickness and facility with which any highly organised industry such as the cotton trade adapts itself and utilises for its own advantages a differential system of custom duties." (Hamilton, Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections 1886-1906 (1922), 244).
122. R C K Ensor, England, 1870-1914 (1936), 260). Southport Visiter 13.5.99.
123. J A S Grenville, Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy, At the Close of the Nineteenth Century, 1964, 113-114, 224 - 30.
124. Manchester Guardian, 3.10.98., 11.10.98., 5.11.98.
125. Kay-Shuttleworth to Campbell - Bannerman, 17.12.98. (Campbell - Bannerman Papers, B M Add. Mss. 41221 vol XVI)
126. Annual Register, 1899, 112.
127. *ibid.*
128. Southport Visiter, 30.5.99., 1.6.99.
129. S Salvidge, Salvidge of Liverpool 33-4 The Southport Visiter, a Conservative paper complained: "The Bishops have lost us Southport. Ritual has taken the place of China." (1.6.99.) The Liberal majority was 583 against 272 in 1898.
130. Oldham Daily Standard 26.6.99.
131. *ibid.*, 26.8.99.
132. *ibid.*, 26.6.99.
133. *ibid.*, 5.7.99.
134. see Elementary Education Return (cd.-315, 1900), P.P., Ixv, Part II 1900.
135. Oldham Daily Standard, 27.6.99., 7.7.99.

136. The voting at Oldham was as follows (Oldham Daily Standard, 7.7.99.):

	Churchill	Emmott	Mawdsley	Runciman
Churchill-Mawdsley	10,929		10,929	
Emmott-Runciman		12,398		12,398
Churchill-Emmott	234	234		
Churchill-Runciman	132			132
Emmott-Mawdsley		257	257	
Mawdsley-Runciman			167	167
Churchill	182			
Emmott		187		
Mawdsley			96	
Runciman				73
TOTALS	11,477	13,076	11,449	12,770

137. see Table 17.
138. cf. H M Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 285.
139. quotations (present author's translation) from F W Bealey, "Les Travaillistes et la Guerre des Boers", Le Mouvement Social, 45, 1963.
140. see p. 320
141. Leigh Chronicle, 5.7.95. and John Lunn, Leigh 286.
142. Campbell-Bannerman Papers, B M Add.Mss., 41221, XVI, dated 17.12.98.
143. In the other bye-elections the Conservatives retained East Toxteth (1902), West Derby and Chorley (1903) whilst the Liberals gained Stalybridge (1905).
144. Bury Times, 3.5.1902. It was claimed that the price of a loaf in Bury had been increased by as much as 2½d.
145. A former Liberal Home Ruler, Lawson.
146. Bury Times, 7.5.1902.
147. *ibid.*, 3.5.1902.
148. *ibid.*, 7.5.02.
149. The Preston bye-election and the L.R.C. in Lancashire are discussed more fully in Chapter 11.

150. Only one seat was being contested owing to the death of a sitting Member, R W Hanbury. (See Preston Herald, 13.5.1903)
151. Liverpool Daily Post, 4.1.1906., 15.1.1906. A more prosaic factor in the Liverpool elections of 1906 was the intense rain on polling day which probably accounted for the low polls at which the Liberals, with fewer conveyances, were at a disadvantage. (see Liverpool Daily Post, 17.1.06).
152. Northern Daily Telegraph, 3.1.1906. Clarion 2.2.06.
153. e.g., Wigan Observer, 19.1.1906.
154. Birrell did in fact introduce a bill in April 1906 designed to remedy some of the Nonconformists' grievances, but it did not seek to alter the structure of the 1902 system.
156. see Frank Bealey & H M Pelling, Labour & Politics 1900-1906 (1958), 272
157. St. Helens Newspaper & Advertiser, 9.1.1906.
158. see Manchester Guardian, 2.9. 12.1.06.
159. e.g. Burnley Gazette, 13.1.06.
160. Liverpool Daily Post 2.1.06. St Helens Newspaper & Advertiser 9.1.06. The same was probably also true at Gorton where John Hodge of the L.R.C. declared firmly for unsectarian education (Clarion, 9.2.06).
161. Robert Speaight, The Life of Hilaire Belloc (1957), 204.
162. *ibid.*, 190-1, There were about 800 Irish voters in Salford South.
163. *ibid.*, 203.
164. e.g. W H Hornby (Blackburn), F Sharp Powell (Wigan,) G J Goschen (Bolton), Arbuthnot (Burnley) and Stanley (Westhoughton). See also Michael Craton and H W Mc Cready, The Great Liberal Revival 1903-06, (Hansard Society).

Chapter 6

1. André Seigfried, Tableau Politique de la France de l'Ouest, 1913
2. See P R Thompson, "Liberals, Radicals and Labour in London, 1880-1900" Past and Present, 27, 1964 and James Cornford, "The Transformation of Conservatism in the late Nineteenth Century", Victorian Studies, Sept., 1963.
3. D E Butler and Donald Stokes, Political Change in Britain, 1969.
4. See Map 9
5. See Table 15.
6. See Table 16.
7. See Table 12.
8. J A Jackson, The Irish in Britain, 1963, 7.
9. see Frederick Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, 1845, trans. and ed. by W O Henderson and W H Chaloner, 1958, 71, 73
10. John Denvir, The Irish in Britain, 1892, 262. H J Hanham, Elections and Party Mangement, 1959, 304-08.
11. S and B Webb, History of Trade Unionism, 1920, 478 n.l.
12. E P M Wollaston, The Irish Natonalist Movement in Great Britain 1880-1908, unpublished M A thesis, London Univ., 1958, 25-7.
13. Census of England and Wales, 1901. Cd - 1002.
14. . John Denvir, op.cit., 429-33.
15. ibid., 435.
16. Victoria County History of Lancashire, II, 1908, 93.
17. C A Bolton, Salford Diocese and its Catholic Past, 1950, 248
18. B Nightingale, Lancashire Nonconformity, I, 36.
19. John Denvir, op.cit., 430.
20. See Map 8.
21. Liverpool became a metropolitan see in 1911 with Thomas Whiteside as the first Archbishop.

22. J O'Connor Power, "The Irish in England", Fortnightly Review, 27, 1880.
23. J A Jackson, The Irish in Britain, 18-19.
24. E J Purcell, Life of Cardinal Manning, 1895, II, 357-60.
25. John Snead Cox, Life of Cardinal Vaughan, 1910, I, 270.
26. ibid., 252, 380.
27. ibid., 414.
28. ibid., 374, 390.
29. see C A Bolton, Salford Diocese and its Catholic Past, ch. XI and Almanac for the Diocese of Salford, 1900.
30. Mount pleasant College Magazine, Summer 1921.
31. See Introduction and Maps 4, 5.
32. J W Diggle, The Lancashire Life of Bishop Fraser, 1890, 166-7, 265.
33. Thomas Hughes, James Fraser, Second Bishop of Manchester, 1888 ed., pp 246-257.
34. Manchester Diocesan Directory, 1885. Dictionary of National Biography, VII. Manchester Guardian, 23-9.10.85.
35. Methodist Monthly, Feb., 1900.
36. Hughes, op.cit., 185, 194.
37. E A Knox, Reminiscences of an Octogenarian, 1847-1934, 1935, 239.
38. for a fuller discussion of this topic see G F A Best, "The Religious Difficulties of National Education in England, 1800-1870," Cambridge Historical Journal, 1956.
39. See Table 11.
40. compare Maps 7 and 10.
41. quoted in P F Clarke, "British Politics and Blackburn Politics", Historical Journal, 1969.
42. see R T McKenzie and A Silver, Angels in Marble, Working Class Conservatives in Urban England, 1968, ch.2.

43. in an electoral speech by R J Feilden, contesting the Chorley seat; Chorley Guardian, 28.11.85.
44. e.g. election address of R W Hanbury at Preston; Preston Guardian, 7.11.85.
45. see the collection of Liberal party manifestoes, National Liberal Club, London.
46. see p. 120
47. see p. 139
48. e.g., Wigan Observer, 7.11.85; Preston Guardian, 7.11.85; Darwen Post, 25.6.92.
49. G Hetherington, "Bishop O'Reilly, Third Bishop of Liverpool", Catholic Record, XXVI, 1956. For Whiteside see Mount Pleasant College Magazine, Summer 1921.
50. On the other hand, Bishop Bilsborrow of Salford appears to have been marginally Liberal over the education question in 1895; see Preston Catholic News, 13.7.95.
51. J O'Connor Power, Fortnightly Review, 27, 1880.
52. John Denvir, op.cit. 326. He estimated Irish voting strength to be about one tenth of the total Irish population (possibly $\frac{1}{2}$ million in 1900).
53. see Map 7.
54. cf. P R Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour: the Struggle for London, 1967, 19, 91.
55. Methodist Monthly, Feb., 1900.
56. 18.7.95.
57. see, e.g., Frank Bealey, "The Northern Weavers, Independent Labour Representation and Clitheroe, 1902", Manchester School, 1957.
58. Beatrice Webb, My Apprenticeship, 1929 ed., 161.
59. see James Vickers, History of Independent Methodism, 1920; H MacLachlan, The Methodist Unitarian Movement, 1919.
60. see Bealey, Manchester School, 1957 and also, on the strength of non-conformity in east Lancashire B Moore, History of Wesleyan Methodism in Burnley and East Lancashire, 18 99.

61. e.g., B Nightingale, Lancashire Nonconformity, vol II, introduction; Ian Sellers, "Nonconformist Attitudes in Later Nineteenth Century Liverpool", Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 114, 1962; J B Horsman, A History of the Hope Congregational Church, Wigan, 1962, 77-86.
62. Baptist Handbook, 1887
63. Beatrice Webb, op.cit., 160-61
64. cf. P R Thompson, op.cit., 95.
65. John Bateman, The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland, 1883
66. A H Birch, Small Town Politics; A Study of Political Life in Glossop, 1959, 18
67. The literature on this subject is vast. See, e.g. Memoir of Nathaniel Eckersley Esq. of Standish Hall, 1892 (Wigan Public Library); H L P Hulbert, Sir Francis Sharp Powell, 1914, 53, 138; D Anderson, "Blundell's Collieries: the Progress of the Business", Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 116, 1964; Wigan Examiner Almanac, 1.1.92; J D Marshall, Furness and the Industrial Revolution, 1958; Walter Bennett, History of Burnley, IV, 1951, 246-7 Preston Guardian, 2.5.7.85.
68. J D Marshall, Furness and the Industrial Revolution, 351-2
69. G C Miller, Blackburn, the Evolution of a Cotton Town, 1951, 373ff.
70. see Table 18.
71. see G R Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, 1965 ed., 235 and Paul Smith, Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform, 1967, 124 n.1. The idea seems to have originated with Richard Cobden; see John Morley, Life of Richard Cobden, 1906 ed., 663.
72. see p. 290
73. P F Clarke, "British Politics and Blackburn Politics", Historical Journal 1969.
74. Wigan Observer, 22.11.85.
75. From a report on Barrow by J B Glasier in National Administrative Council Minute Book, 26.11.98.
76. J D Marshall, op.cit., 251, 402, 415-16.
77. St Helens Newspaper and Advertiser, 7.11.85.

78. e.g. the Chorley election of 1885 when a Birmingham barrister lost heavily to a local landowner, Chorley Guardian 31.10.85.
79. List of Mines (Home Office), 1901; D Anderson, Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. and Chesh., 116, 1964.
80. G E Diggle, A History of Widnes, 1961, 83-4. J D Marshall notes "..... the group of men who had assisted at the birth of Barrow had ceased to exert any direct influence by 1888." (op. cit., 402).
81. J M Lee, Social Leaders and Public Persons: a Study of County Government in Cheshire since 1888, 1963, 86-94. Also Katharine Chorley, Manchester Made Them, 1950.
82. G E Diggle, op.cit., 77-8.
83. The phrase is that of J M Lee
84. see Table 14.
85. see Chapter 12 passim
86. A H Birch, Small Town Politics, 111; D Butler and D Stokes, Political Change in Britain, 109.

CHAPTER VII

1. Burnley Gazette, 28.3.85
2. *ibid.*, 28.11.85. Although Birtwistle had resigned as secretary of the larger Weavers' Amalgamation on his appointment to the Royal Commission, he remained an official of the smaller, older Amalgamation.
3. A List of the Departments and Branches of the National Reform League....., 1868. (Howell Collection, Bishopgate Institute.)
4. see L. Bather, A History of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Manchester University, 1956), 89ff.
5. Cotton Factory Times, 19.6.85; 30.4.86
6. T.U.C., Annual Report, 1885. The words are those of T. R. Threlfall, Secretary of the Southport Trades Council, who founded the body.
7. see Manchester Guardian, 3.11.85
8. G. C. Miller, Blackburn: the Evolution of a Cotton Town, 1951, 329, 371-7
9. Barrett and Co., Directory and Topography of.....Blackburn, 1881
10. G. C. Miller, Blackburn Worthies of Yesterday, 1959, 54.
11. Cotton Factory Times, 29.5.85. It is unlikely that this body had any formal connection with the national Labour Representation League which had sponsored candidates at the General Election of 1874 but which had passed into obscurity by the late 1870's.
12. see Blackburn Times, 16.5; 20.9; 14.11.85
13. *ibid.*, 16.5.85
14. Preston Guardian, 9.5.85. The principal trade union figures in Boothman's campaign were George Barker of the Weavers and Tom Fenton of the Spinners.
15. 1.8.85
16. A Spinners' Union meeting attempted to pass a vote of censure on its officials for supporting Boothman. (Blackburn Times, 6.6.85)
17. Cotton Factory Times, 27.11.85
18. Result: Coddington, C; 9168. Peel, C; 8425. Briggs, L; 6739. Boothman; 5341.
19. A contemporary estimate gave 400 Tory votes to Boothman, (Blackburn Times, 12.12.85)

20. Cotton Factory Times, 27.11.85.
21. His programme was based on the T.U.C.'s demands for industrial, social and electoral reform and constituted an advanced radical policy. (see Cotton Factory Times, 23.10.85)
22. Boothman in fact later became a Conservative and was Mayor of Blackburn, 1890-1892.
23. Burgess was born at Failsworth, near Manchester, in 1853. As a youth he had worked in the cotton mills but his talents as a rhymster earned him a position with the Oldham Express when he was in his late twenties. (see his autobiography A Potential Poet?, 1927, and biographical details in the Labour Annual of 1895)
24. Unfortunately the author's attempts to obtain circulation figures from the newspaper's proprietors have proved unsuccessful.
25. 16.1.85
26. Cotton Factory Times, 30.1.85
27. *ibid.*, 30.10.85
28. *ibid.*, 13.3.85
29. Manufacturers and businessmen possibly gained commercially out of a position in local politics, though the Cotton Factory Times could not understand "how it is that working men prefer to vote for these instead of bringing out respectable and intelligent members of their own order....." (14.5.87)
30. *ibid.*, 25.10.89
31. see N. J. Frangapulo (ed.), Rich Inheritance, a Guide to the History of Manchester, 1962, 54-62
32. e.g. in Burnley poor law relief was administered to over 3,000 people weekly during the trade depression of 1879, but during the 1880's this number was gradually reduced and stood at around 1,000 by 1889. The poor rate fell from 6½d in the £ in 1878 to 4½d in 1895. (Walter Bennett, The History of Burnley, 1951, IV, 42-43)
33. One of the extremely rare examples is that of the Haslingden Cooperative Party, prominent in Haslingden politics during the 1870's and 1880's. Its history can be partly traced through the collection of electoral notices and songs for Haslingden in the Lancashire Record Office (DDX, 118.15) covering the period c.1875-1890.
34. Oldham Chronicle, 26.12.85
35. *ibid.*, 2.1.86
36. North Cheshire Herald, 26.9.85

37. ibid., 7.11.85
38. Rochdale Observer, 17.10.85
39. ibid., 17.11.85
40. ibid., 24, 31.10; 21..11.85.
41. 1.4.87
42. Steam Engine Makers' Society, 63rd Annual Report, 1887.
43. Amalgamated Society of Engineers 37th Annual Report, 1888. For a detailed discussion of the wages question see The Strike in the Bolton Iron Trade (1887), in the Howell Collection, (331.89/21b), Bishopgate Institute.
44. Bolton Weekly Guardian, 30.4; 21.5.87, and J. C. Scholes, History of Bolton, 1892, 527. By the beginning of June about 1,500 men were on strike; they were members of the S.E.M.S., A.S.E., the Metal Planers' Society and the Pattern Makers Society. Some non-unionists were also supported from society funds.
45. One incident which particularly inflamed the strikers' anger occurred when 3 Scots^s workmen were escorted to the Victoria Foundry by 9 policemen. (Bolton Weekly Guardian, 25.6.87)
46. account from Bolton Weekly Guardian, 2.7; 16.7.87, and James Clegg, Annals of Bolton (1888), 227.
47. Bolton Weekly Guardian, 24.9; 29.10.87
48. ibid., 29.10.87
49. ibid., 24.9.87. There were 6 S.D.F. candidates distributed in Bradford, Derby and Exchange wards; all were defeated. For a further discussion of Bolton S.D.F. see Chapter 9.
50. Michael Battle, an insurance agent who had been elected to the Council in 1886, joined the eight labour representatives in 1887.
51. Bolton Weekly Guardian, 21.6; 18.10.90
52. 17.10.90
53. e.g., Blackburn (Northern Daily Telegraph), 23.10.89)
54. Liverpool Trades Council was openly negotiating to sponsor Liberal Labour candidates in 1889. (Sydney Maddock, The Liverpool Trades Council and Politics, 1878-1918. Unpublished MA. Thesis, Liverpool University\112ff.)
1459
55. see pp.87-8 .
56. Workman's Times, 3.10.90

57. *ibid.*, 10.10.90
58. *ibid.*, 7.11.90. It is worth noting that this was not the first attack on big business in St. Helens. In 1885, when the Pilkingtons and others had opposed the scheme for a Manchester Ship Canal, a parliamentary campaign had been planned by an Irish worker, J. Cross, to lobby for the Canal, which, it was thought, would provide St. Helens workers with jobs. Cross's organisation was inadequate to sustain a campaign and he did not go to the Polls, but work on the canal was started despite the Pilkingtons' opposition. (St. Helens Newspaper, 7.2; 29.8; 19.9.85)
59. Nelson's population almost doubled between 1881 and 1891 - 16,725 to 31,339. (Walter Bennett, History of Marsden and Nelson, 1957, 174)
60. see Nelson Weavers' Association, Minute Book, 1.5.90.
61. Originally the Weavers had wanted the Trades Council to support the Labour candidates, but having only just been established the Trades Council had insufficient funds to finance a campaign. (Weavers' Minute Book, 28.7; 14.8; 26.8.90. Trades Council Minute Book, 20.8.90) see also Nelson Chronicle, 1.8.90
62. Nelson Chronicle, 26.9.90
63. *ibid.*, 3.10.90
64. 31.10.90

CHAPTER 8

1. Webb Trade Union Collection, A, XXVII, (i) 17-22
2. Wigan Observer, 12.6.85. The questions advanced included the following issues:
 - i) amendment to the 1880 Employers Liability Act.
 - ii) amendments to the 1872 Mines Regulation Act.
 - iii) Reform of the land laws
 - iv) Free Education in Elementary day schools.
 - vii) Payment of M.P.s
 - viii) Relatives to be allowed to attend coroners' inquests on deaths caused in mines.
 - ix) Fees for returning officers at elections to be paid out of rates
 - x) Reform of the House of Lords.
3. see Wigan Observer, 12.6.85, 17.7.85 and the report of a speech at Aspull by Frank Hardcastle, Conservative candidate for Westhoughton; (ibid, 20.5.85)
4. ibid., 17.6.85
5. Webb Trade Union Collection, A, xxvii, (i), 17.
6. see Wigan Observer, 17.11.85, 21.11.85
7. see chapter 5 & Table 17.
8. L.C.M.F. Proceedings, 31.8.86.
9. See B.C. Roberts, The Trades Union Congress 1868-1921, (1958) 109-110.
10. L.C.M.F. 3.9.87, 1.10.87
11. In 1888 the districts were urged by the Federation leaders to send delegates to Westminster in order to lobby M.P.s on this measure. Earlier however, the sensible proposal to establish a legislative fund to finance such deputations had been rejected by the Lancashire Miners' conference (L.C.M.F., 13.4.86, 15.3.87 12.5.88).
12. Webb Trade Union Collection A, xxvii, (i) 17-22
13. R. Page-Arnot, The Miners (1959), 84-87.
14. Trade Union Congress, Annual Report, 1889, 58. Addressing miners at Pendlebury in September 1890, Sam Woods agreed that an Eight Hours Law might be ruinous for some trades, but "to the miners, railway servants and sailors it would be a perfect "godsend" (Cotton Factory Times, 19.9.90)

15. The miners of the north east worked in general shorter hours than most others and opposed an eight hour shift applied by Act of Parliament. John Wilson of the Durham Miners calculated that eight hour shifts in Durham would cause the turning off of 10 to 15,000 hands, or mean the adoption of two shifts of hewers and two shifts of off-handed men and lads, thus increasing hewers hours by over an hour a day. He urged those who wanted such a change to pursue it by trade union negotiation, not by law. (see his 'History of the Durham Miners' Association 1870-1904 (1907), 200)
16. W. E. Harvey of Derbyshire claimed that "if they waited until it was obtained by legislation the grass would grow over the graves of some of them". (J.E. Williams, The Derbyshire Miners (1962), 293)
17. L.C.M.F. Rules, 1891 (Webb Collection c.68 viii).
18. Bolton Weekly Guardian, 3.5.90
19. ibid, 3.5.90
20. R. Page Arnot, The Miners 149
21. Philip Magnus, Gladstone (1963 ed.) 396.
22. "The Future of the Liberal Party", Gladstone's speech delivered to the 14th Annual Meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Newcastle, October 2nd, 1891. It is the title of a National Reform Union pamphlet in which the speech is reported. (see p.12.)
23. Wigan Examiner, 30.1.92, 26.3.92
24. See Wades' Parliamentary Record, 1892
25. H. S. Karr (Con. St. Helens), C. Wright (Lib., Leigh) J. S. Balfour (Lib., Burnley) and Robert Leake (Lib. Radcliffe) who moved the second reading).
26. At this time also the coalowners were organising a Defence Association, a powerful body designed to give mutual protection and ensure combined action among colliery owners in disputes with workers, Alfred Hewlett of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company and a leading Conservative was the originator of the scheme and became the Association's president. The body was dominated, because of arrangements for representation from companies, by the Wigan Coal and Iron and the Andrew Knowles' companies.
(see Wigan Examiner 6.5.92., 10.6.92)

27. L.C.M.F. 12.4.93 (Circular issued by Ashton).
28. Wigan Observer, 13.7.92
29. Wigan Examiner, 25.6.92
30. for Woods campaign see Wigan Examiner, 15.6.92, 1.7.92 and Wigan Observer, 2.7.92, 13.7.92. Woods received visits from the London Labour politician John Burns and from the Liverpool Baptist minister C.F. Aked, who delivered a diatribe on the character of Woods' opponent, Blundell. (See Wigan Observer 4.6.92)
31. Wigan Observer, 25.6.92
32. The Conservatives sponsored a series of letters to local newspapers written by working colliers and intended to discredit Aspinwall for appearing to be neglecting his work in Wigan by seeking entry to Parliament. It was said that he should concentrate on his duties to Wigan Miners by devising a superannuation scheme. (Wigan Examiner 1.7.92., 6.7.92) The Conservatives also capitalised on a local journal, the Comet, which from 1889 -c. 1892 had appeared fortnightly in the Wigan area carrying hostile leaders against the Eight Hours Bill - "a fallacy, a snare and a delusion." (Comet, 6.4.89) Although the Comet opposed Woods and Ashton on this issue it was fully behind the Federation in its attempts to have Labour representation. (ibid 17.5.90, 25.7.91), so that it probably did not give a very clear lead to miners one way or the other. (For the Comet see files, 1889-1891, at Wigan Public Library).
33. Result: Powell (c), 3422; Aspinwall, 3312
34. Wigan Examiner, 8.7.92
35. Result: Woods, 4579; Blundell (c), 4352.
36. Wigan Examiner, 6.7.92
37. for example, the four mining constituencies in Derbyshire. For the Liberal attitude in these areas see J. E. Williams, The Derbyshire Miners (1962), 495.
38. L.C.M.F. 13.1.94
39. ibid., 10.2.94
40. ibid., 7.4.94, 5.5.94

41. Sam Woods had moved the second reading of this bill in May 1893, but in February 1895 it had gone no further and was dropped again. In 1894 Woods had replaced Fenwick as Secretary of the T.U.C.'s Parliamentary Committee primarily to push through the Miners' Eight Hours Bill. It was important that he retain his seat in Parliament to do this.
42. Probably a model of the type of candidate required was W. R. Kennedy who had fought St. Helens in 1892, advancing many working class reforms but nonetheless a respectable middle class man. (St. Helens Newspaper and Advertiser, 18.6.92)
43. See Wigan Observer, 22.6.92
44. L.C.M.F. 12.1.95, 9.2.95
45. Wigan Observer, 29.6.95. William Woods contested Ashton under Lyne in 1895 but was defeated in a three cornered contest. For his own impressions of the Wigan situation see his speech reported in Ashton under Lyne Reporter, 18.5.95.
46. Conservative propaganda concentrated largely on this issue:
e.g.

"Th^usands now are almost starving
And have scarcely got a farthing
The trade is very bad indeed
A fact in which all are agreed:
But now the Liberal party's dead
Let's hope soon to be better fed."

see Lines on the Wigan Parliamentary Election, 1895 by J. Brown.
Copy in Wigan Public Library.
47. Wigan Observer, 15.7.95
48. Results: Wigan. Powell, 3949: Aspinwall 3075
Ince. Blundell 5235: Woods, 4790
49. Wigan Observer, 15.7.95
50. *ibid.*, 17.7.95
51. *ibid.*, 20.7.95
52. 29.5.85
53. See S. and B. Webb, History of Trade Unionism (1920 ed.) 307-12.

54. Webb Trade Union Collection, A, xxxiv, (i), 70. (ii), 198
55. Complaints were most often heard about the amount of dust in cardrooms, the running of machinery after statutory finishing times, the system of fining workers for lateness or bad work, the driving of workers by overlookers and the nibbling of wages by employers. The Rules of the Card and Blowing Room Amalgamation (1888), included the object".....the enforcement of the Factory Acts and other legislative enactment for the protection of Labour....." (see Webb Trade Union Collection c.92. viii)
56. Northern Counties Factory Acts Reform Assoc., Report of Conference, 1886.
57. Cotton Factory Times, 30.7.86
58. i) that all applications for shares in a limited company be accompanied by a deposit of at least 10 p.c. of share capital applied for. ii) at least a second 10 p.c. to be paid on the allotment of shares. iii) The whole of the capital to be subscribed and at least 75 p.c. to be paid up before the company commences operations. iv) every transfer of share to carry a stamp in proportion to the amount changing hands equal to 1 p.c. of the value thereof. v) directors to be individually and collectively responsible for money borrowed beyond what is covered by the ordinary assets of the company. Mawdsley hoped that these provisions would put an end to capitalisation by those who wanted to make quick profits out of the cotton industry.
59. "In recent years", he said, "....parliamentary business has got into such a muddle that it is difficult to say what can be done, but in this case we can only hope for the best". (Spinners Amalgamation, Annual Report, 1886).
60. Cotton Factory Times, 23.12.87.
61. United Textile Factory Workers' Association, Report of Conference 9.5.89. For details of negotiations; Northern Counties Factory Acts Reform Association, Report of Committee Meeting, 23.10.86 and Cotton Factory Times, 18.2.87. For the abortive bill see Annual Register, 1888, 137
62. For a fuller discussion of this process see Roland Smith, A History of the Lancashire Cotton Industry Between the Years 1873 and 1896. (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Birmingham, 1954).
63. Borough of Blackburn, (Steaming in Weaving Sheds; Report of the Special Committee (1888) and Print of Evidence. British Library of Political and Economical Science, London School of Economics.

64. e.g. Cotton Factory Times, 12.10.88, 16.11.88, 28.12.88.
65. In a speech at Rishton Holmes had talked of total abolition.
(Cotton Factory Times, 27.7.88).
66. *ibid.*, 29.3.89
67. Cotton Factory Times. 24.5.89
68. Accounts from U.T.F.W.A. Report of Conference 27.7.89 and
Cotton Factory Times, 2.8.89.
69. The Cotton Cloth Factories Act (1889), 52 and 55 Vict. c62.
Thermometers were to be set up in weaving sheds to show the
amount of humidity and the Act provided a schedule for the
limits beyond which steaming was not to be permitted.
70. 2.8.89
71. Cotton Factory Times, 2.8.89. Holmes attended the meeting at Great
Harwood when this was discussed and had great difficulty in
making himself heard.
72. U.T.F.W.A. Report of Conference, 26.7.90.
73. Cotton Factory Times, 26.9.90
74. 31.7.91
75. Cotton Factory Times, 4.9.91
76. Clegg, Fox and Thompson's assertion, (History of British Trade
Unions, vol.1, 1889-1910 (1964), 244 n.3.
77. Cotton Factory Times, 3.6.92
78. e.g. U.T.F.W.A. Annual Conference Report, 28.7.1914; motion
of J. Parkington calling for parliamentary legislation to
abolish steaming in all cotton factories.
79. Described by the Webbs as a "cabinet, composed in the main of
the salaried officials of the separate unions", which "meets
regularly throughout the year exclusively for political
business. At these private meetings, held in the parlor of
a Manchester public house, all rhetoric and formality is banished
and the complaints of the constituents are discussed with
cynical shrewdness". (S. and B. Webb, Industrial Democracy
(1897), 260-61)

80. U.T.F.W.A Rules, 1890 (Webb Trade Union Collection c.100 ii)
The name of the organisation changed twice between 1886 and 1889; U.T.F.W.A. is still used.
81. Weavers wages were calculated by the kind, quality and amount of work performed. Before 1891 employers did not give weavers exact specifications of work to be done and often operatives found they were doing work for which they were not being paid.
82. See e.g. Cotton Factory Times, 17.4. 91.
83. In 1878 the age limit for half time labour was 10 years; by the 1891 Act it was raised to 11 and this came into operation in January 1893. The clause had been introduced by Sydney Buxton, Liberal M.P. for Poplar, (See Annual Register, 1891, 140-41) and incorporated into the Factory and Workshop Act (1891), 54 and 55 Vict c.75 (The "Particulars clause" was sec. 24 of this Act.)
84. reproduced in U.T.F.W.A., Report of Conference, 25.7.91
85. T.U.C. Annual Report, 1885
86. Cotton Factory Times, 5.2.86
87. *ibid.*, 28.10.87
88. T.U.C. Annual Report 1887
89. *ibid.*, 1888.
90. Cotton Factory Times, 2.12.87
91. T.U.C. Annual Report, 1888
92. Cotton Factory Times, 4.3.87
93. Trades Union Congress, Annual Report 1889. 38 societies representing only 169,540 trade unionists made returns. The principle of an Eight Hours Day was opposed by 62,883 to 39,629. A large majority of those who favoured restriction wanted it by legislation. According to Mawdsley's returns both the Spinners' and Weavers' Amalgamations were in total opposition.
94. *ibid.*

95. *ibid.*, 1890, 63
96. Spinners' Amalgamation, Executive Council Minutes, 7.7.90.
97. Cotton Factory Times, 26.9.90
98. Bolton Weekly Guardian 13.9.90
99. Cotton Factory Times. 14.11.90
100. *ibid.*, 15.12.90
101. Cotton Factory Times, 26.9.90. Report of a speech made during the Fabian Lancashire campaign of 1890.
102. *ibid.*
103. Spinners' Amalgamation, Report, 31.12.92.
104. Cotton Factory Times, 13, 20, 27.5.92.

CHAPTER 9

1. On the origins of the S.D.F. see M.S. Wilkins, "The Non-Socialist Origins of England's First Important Socialist Organisation," International Review of Social History, 1959.
2. See C. Tsuzuki, H.M. Hyndman and British Socialism, 1961.
3. Justice, 9, 16, 23.3.84
4. ibid., 27.6; 8.8.85
5. P. R. Thompson, Socialists, Liberal and Labour; the Struggle for London, 1885 - 1914, (1967), 114
6. For instance, the historians of the S.D.F. (H.W. Lee and E. Archbold, Social Democracy in Britain, 1935) attribute the temporary decline of Salford S.D.F. to the Socialist League split of 1884 (pp. 51-5) but it is far more likely that the branch expired late in 1885 when London attention was centred on the General Election.
7. Quoted in Tsuzuki, Hyndman and British Socialism, 55-6
8. See Justice, 16.2; 20.9.84
9. Champion left the S.D.F. in the late 1880's to form an independent party based on the working class and trade unions; he never succeeded in leading such a party and later emigrated to Australia.
10. Justice, 21,6,84
11. The programme (Justice, 22.8.85) was a mixture of socialism and radicalism; it suggested nationalisation in certain industries, an eight hours day, universal suffrage, payment of M.P.s and abolition of the House of Lords, amongst other points.
12. H.M. Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party, (1965 ed.) 42-3
13. Manifesto of the Social Democratic Federation, 15 Feb. 1886 (British Library of Political and Economic Science)
14. Justice, 5.7.84
15. Morris reported optimistically to a fellow socialist: "Oldham a good place if properly worked, strike threatened, business very bad: Radicals not so hard boiled as in some places: a kind of Cobbettism welcome to them." (Philip Henderson, Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends, 1950 - Morris to Scheu, 16.7.85.) See also E. P. Thompson, William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary (1955) 453-4

16. Justice, 10.12.87
17. Quoted in Tsuzuki, op. cit., 50
18. Justice, 27.8.87
19. ibid., 1.1.87
20. Lee and Archbold, Social Democracy in Britain, 85. Watts had been at Blackburn in February 1887 organising a propaganda department for the local S.D.F. (Justice, 26.2.87)
21. See his autobiography, Tom Mann's Memoirs (1923). He later joined the I.L.P. and became its secretary, worked in Australia for some years, was associated with the Syndicalist Movement in Britain before the First World War and joined the Communist Party after it. As a trade unionist he was an official of Ben Tillett's Docker's Union (1889 - 1892) and secretary of the A.E.U. (1919 - 1921); he also sat on the Royal Commission on Labour (1891 - 1894)
22. Justice, 17.9.87. Bolton Weekly Guardian, 24.9.87
23. Bolton Weekly Guardian, 24.9.87
24. Justice, 2.7; 1.9.88
25. ibid., 4.8.88
26. The National Labour Electoral Association.
27. Nat. Lab. Electoral Assoc.
28. Quoted in Dona Torr, Tom Mann and His Times, vol. 1, 1856 - 1890 (1956), 255 ff.
29. Justice, 5.12.91.
30. Philip Henderson (ed.), Letters of William Morris....., Morris to Jane Morris, 14.12.88₈
31. Justice, 5.12.88
32. eg., Manchester Guardian, 5.5.90
33. The Social Democrat, III, 1899
34. See Justice, 10.11.88, 6.4.89
35. Workman's Times, 1.4.93

36. eg. Blackburn S.D.F. supported fair contract clauses, an eight hour day and municipal control over artisans' dwellings, hospitals and unemployed labour. (Justice, 25.10.90)
37. *ibid.*, 25.10; 13.12.90
38. Hyndman deals with these topics in Chapter IV of his book
39. Justice, 2.5.91
40. See p. 105 ff.
41. Tsuzuki, Hyndman and British Socialism, 92
42. Workman's Times, 21.5; 25.6.92
43. Salford Chronicle, 12.3; 9.4.92
44. Result: Con., 3406; Lib., 3309; Soc., 553.
45. 16.7.92
46. Justice, 6.2.92
47. Social Democrat, III, 1899
48. *ibid.*
49. Workman's Times, 12.8.93
50. See pp 224-8 .
51. Justice, 6.2.92
52. R.C. on Labour, 1st Report, Group C, vol 1, 1892, p.11 and questions 72-6, 391, 732
53. 22.4.92
54. Nelson Weavers, Minute Book, 22.7.91
55. Cotton Factory Times, 22.4.92
56. eg. *ibid.*, 24.6.92.
57. Burnley Weavers, Minute Book, 11.5; 24.9.92. Cotton Factory Times, 24.6.92
58. Nelson Chronicle, 19.8.92
59. Workman's Times, 8.7.93
60. Burnley Socialist, 4.11.93

61. See Appendix to Chapter 9, " A Socialist Municipal Charter, Burnley, 1893."
62. Burnley Socialist, 14.10.93
63. See p.73 ff.
64. Walter Bennett, History of Burnley (1951), IV, 133
65. Workman's Times, 11.11.93
66. Burnley Weavers, Minute Book, 18.5; 1.9.92
67. Burnley Gazette, 4.8.94. Weavers' Minute Book, 1.8; 10.8.94.
68. Burnley Gazette, 3.11.94
69. eg. Nelson Trades Council, Minute Book, 16.12.91
70. Nelson Chronicle, 22.4.92
71. Nelson Weavers, Minute Book, 18.4; 25.4; 24.5; 13.6.92; Nelson Chronicle, 17.6.92.
72. Nelson Chronicle, 23.12.92.
73. See also p.271
74. Nelson Chronicle, 12.5.93.
75. Burnley Socialist, 28.10.93.
76. *ibid.*, 4.11; 24.11.93.
77. In February 1894 there were 27 branches in Lancashire. Some were no doubt inactive, but others carried out fairly constant propaganda even if none could match Burnley's claim to have over 1,000 members. (See Justice, 19.5.94).
78. Terrett's progress in the mining towns is reported in Justice; 4.2; 15.4; 9.9.93
79. Justice, 1.6.95
80. Burnley Gazette, 20.7.95
81. The Times, 23.7.95
82. Watters was President of the Trades Council in 1895 and one of the most confirmed Liberals of the older trade unionists.

83. Result; Con., 3384; Lib., 3310; Soc., 813. Account of the Election from Manchester Guardian, 4-15.7.95.
84. H. M. Hyndman, Further Reminiscences (1912), claimed (pp.67-69) that "the graveyards of Burnley were brought to the poll", i.e. that the electors who had died were registered and their votes used by Liberals and Conservatives.
85. See Justice, 19.8.93
86. The Times, 23.7.95
87. Hyndman and British Socialism, 100
88. This description of Watts is by Harry Quelch, editor of Justice, in an article in The Social Democrat, 15.1.1903.
89. eg. Tsuzuki. op. cit. 135.
90. Burnley Socialist, 11.11.93
91. Clarion, 28.5.92
92. At the foundation of the National I.L.P. in 1893 there were 19 branches in Lancashire (I.L.P. Conference Report, 1893) A year later the number had risen to 26 (Workman's Times, 13.1.94) and in 1895 the Labour Annual listed 45 local parties in Lancashire.
93. E. S. Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, (1913), 128.
94. see article by A. M. Thompson, Manchester Guardian, 1.1.1944
95. Blatchford to G. B. Shaw, 18.8.92. (Shaw Correspondence Series I, B. M. Add. Mss., 50512, Vol V)
96. Clarion, 15.7.93
97. Workman's Times, 5.8.93
98. M.S.T.C., Annual Report, 1892
99. Manchester Guardian, 2.11.93
100. E. S. Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, 95, 129-130
101. *ibid.*, 125
102. The paper was a special edition of the Workman's Times; it lasted until January 1894. It was well received by Ashton and Glover of the L.C.M.F., (See 9.12.93)

103. Manchester Guardian, 2.11.94. By 1894 Sutton had organised a vigorous branch of the I.L.P. at Bradford, in the parliamentary division of East Manchester.
104. Reprinted in the Workman's Times, 5.8.93
105. Harker, of the Shirt and Jacket Cutters, and Sutton were I.L. Pers. The other socialist representative was George Tabbron, a social democrat of the Brassfounders. (See M.S.T.C., Annual Report, 1894)
106. *ibid.*, 1896.
107. Manchester Guardian, 2.11.94 and Clarion, 27.10.94
108. Manchester Guardian, 3, 20.11.94. Pankhurst, *op. cit.*, 119
109. See pp 123-4, 181-2.
110. Minute Book, Liberal 1200 of Manchester; 22.11.91.
111. e.g., Minute Book, Manchester Central Liberal Registration Committee 7.6.87, 18.7.87.
112. e.g., Minute Book, Liberal 1200 of Manchester, 29.4.86, 27.7.86, 29.4.95.
113. L. Bather, "Manchester and Salford Trades Council from 1880", Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 6, 1963.
114. Clarion, 11.2.93
115. Minute Book, Manchester Liberal Union, 17.11.93
116. *ibid.*, 16-17.11.93
117. *ibid.*
118. *ibid.*
119. See P. R. Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour: the Struggle for London, 1885-1914 (1967), 99-100
120. This information was kindly supplied to the author by Dr. P. F. Clarke of University College, London.
121. Minute Book, Manchester Liberal Union, Minutes of Sub. Committee Meeting, 13.6.94.
122. Thompson, *op. cit.*, 104.

123. Minute Book, Manchester Liberal Union, report of sub-committee meeting, 19.12.94.
124. The Liverpool Trades Council membership in 1889 was about 10,000 with 26 affiliated societies; in 1891 it was 46,168 with 47 societies. (Liverpool T.C., Annual Report 1890-91.)
125. See Sydney Maddock, The Liverpool Trades Council and Politics 1878-1918.
126. Labour Chronicle, Nov. - Dec., 1895. Trades Council Annual Report, 1894-95, 1895-96
127. Trades Council, Annual Report, 1896-97
128. Trades Council Labour candidates contested municipal elections in 1899 and 1900. Shannon, the secretary, had commented in 1897 that the decision to disband the L.R.C. did not "stultify the independent action of the Council should an opportunity present itself in the future." (Annual Report, 1896-97)
129. Workman's Times, 12.8.93
130. See Rochdale Star, 1.7; 25.11.92
131. C. Tsuzuki, Hyndman and British Socialism, 96
132. Justice, 9.7.92
133. *ibid.*, 4.6.92.
134. *ibid.*, 13.8.92
135. Workman's Times, 3.3.94
136. I.L.P. Conference Report, 1893
137. Letter to W. Palmer of the Clarion. (Blatchford Correspondence, Manchester Central Library,) c.1894.
138. Clarion, 11.8.94
139. *ibid.*, 17.11.94
140. Minute Book, I.L.P. National Administrative Council; 26.2; 28.5; 10.9; 4.12.94
141. See Sandy MacFarlane's "Notes from the North", Justice, 9.2.95
142. The Executive Committee of the Council was divided into four parts, with 5 textile representatives, 2 engineering, 1 building and 4 from the general trades (Oldham Trades Council

142. (cont.)
Annual Report, 1892
143. J. R. Clynes, Memoirs, I, 75
144. Oldham Trades Council, Annual Report, 1893
145. Workman's Times, 11.3.93
146. Colliery Workman's Times, 2.12.93
147. Nelson Chronicle, 23.12.92
148. Burnley Socialist, 21.10; 24.11.93
149. Nelson Trades Council, Minute Book, 21.3.93
Nelson Chronicle, 5.12.93
150. For results in other boroughs see Manchester Guardian, 2.11.93
and Workman's Times, 11.11.93
151. Preston Guardian, 28.10.93 and Manchester Guardian, 2.11.93
152. Cardroom Amalgamation, Quarterly Report, 24.9.93; Executive
Council Minute Book, 11.11.93.
153. Cardroom Amalgamation, Quarterly Report, 23.12.93
154. Cotton Factory Times, 15.7.92
155. U.T.F.W.A., Conference Report, 1893
156. 29.12.93
157. See letters on this subject in Workman's Times, 12,19.8.93.
158. Nelson Chronicle, 2.3.94.
159. Weavers Amalgamation, Minute Book, 10.3.94.
160. In 1893 the U.T.F.W.A. had decided to support a trade option
bill on Eight Hours through the T.U.C., but little interest
was shown in it by the cotton workers. J. H. Maden, M.P. for
Rossendale, eventually agreed to introduce a bill in
parliament and its reading took place in March 1894.
(Ironically Maden conducted a ballot on eight hours shifts among
his own workers in one of his mills near Bacup and found that
his employees voted decisively against the idea. See Burnley
Gazette, 1.9.94)
161. U.T.F.W.A., Conference Report, 1894

162. See Labour Leader, 14.4.94. It was reported that output and wages remained practically the same.
163. Royal Commission on Labour, Fifth and Final Report, Part 1, 1894, 133.
164. Burnley Gazette, 1.8.94
165. *ibid.*; in contrast to the compliment paid by Hyndman to Mawdsley, Justice referred to Holmes as "surely consciously or unconsciously, one of the greatest enemies of the workers." (11.8.94).
166. See his speech to Oldham cardroom operatives, Oldham Daily Standard, 26.2.94
167. Sir James Sexton, Sir James Sexton Agitator....., 146.
168. David Holmes had said that a 15% reduction in wages could be expected. (Burnley Gazette, 31.10.94)
169. See U.T.F.W.A., Report of the Ballot on the Eight Hour Day and Labour Representation, (Conference Report, 1895.) The vote in these four areas was:

	Burnley		Padiham		Nelson		Colne	
Eight hours	F 4250	A 3498	F 1175	A 958	F 2328	A 1051	F 816	A 274
Lab. Rep.	4239	3009	1117	777	2227	594	742	147

170. Mawdsley and Holmes were to be paid £300 p.a. as cotton union M.P.s (U.T.F.W.A., Report of Sepcial Representative Meeting, 19.1.95, 28.2.95)
171. The Cotton Factory Times had commented on the scheme that "there is not a constituency in Lancashire....that would adopt as candidates either Mr. Holmes or Mr. Mawdsley unless they came out on party lines."
172. The new standing orders, which caused the exclusion of some leading socialists from Congress, were passed by the first use of the card vote. (T.U.C., Annual Report, 1895.)
173. Cotton Factory Times, 29.3.95
174. Oldham Daily Standard, 18.6.95; Labour Leader, 3.8.95.
175. Oldham Daily Standard, 19.6.95. The Oldham Spinners held a ballot on withdrawal which showed that 10 of the 15 local branches of the union wanted to follow Ashton's lead.

176. It dropped from over 25,000 to around 19,000.
177. Oldham Trades Council, Annual Report, 1895
178. See remarks in I.L.P. National Administrative Council Minute Book, 10.9.94.
179. "I claim to be as advanced as any man in the Independent Labour Party Movement.....but I don't want to appear ridiculous. I am a trade unionist but I take it that their principles are antagonistic to trade unions."
(Workman's Times, 16.9.93.)
180. A. E. P. Duffy, "Differing Policies and Personal Rivalries in the Origins of the Independent Labour Party," Victorian Studies, VI, 1962
181. e.g., from Bolton I.L.P. (Workman's Times, 5.8.93)
182. Labour Prophet, August, 1895
183. See E. P. Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire", in Essays in Labour History, (Ed. Asa Briggs and John Saville, 1960).
184. I.L.P. Conference Report, 1893.
185. ibid., 1894
186. Clarion, 4.2.93
187. See H. M. Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party (1965 ed.) 65, 69.
188. Bolton I.L.P. Pioneer, Feb., 1895
189. Clarion, 11.2.93
190. ibid.
191. see p. 303 ff.
192. Blatchford to John Burns, 19.3.92. (Burns Papers, B.M. Add. Mss., 46287, Vol. VII)
193. Clarion, 11.2.93
194. Hall was still the party's president, whilst Brocklehurst had replaced Heaviside as vice-president in January 1894.
195. Clarion, 1.7.93

196. *ibid.*, 24.11.94
197. *ibid.*, e.g., 1.12.94
198. Labour Leader, 6.7.95
199. James Havelock Wilson, of the Sailors and Fireman's Union;
a Lib-Lab M.P.
200. Blatchford Correspondence: letter written in September 1894.
201. See Labour Leader, 20.7.94
202. *ibid.*, 8.9.94
203. I.L.P., National Administrative Council, Minute Book, 9.7.95.
E. S. Pankhurst, The Suffragette Movement, 133.
204. I.L.P. candidates received the following votes: Tattersall
(Preston) 4781; Pankhurst (Gorton) 4261; Brocklehurst (Bolton)
2694; Barnes (Rochdale) 1251; Johnston (Manchester N.E.) 546;
Christie (Hyde) 448; Sexton (Ashton) 415; Curran (Barrow) 414
205. Labour Leader, 27.7.95
206. 12.12.91
207. See G. D. H. Cole, A History of Socialist Thought III, Part 1,
167.
208. Merrie England (1894), 105, 197-8
209. H. M. Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party, 161
210. All About the Clarion Vans (The Clarion, 1904.)
211. C. Stella Davies, North Country Bred; a Working Class Family
Chronicle (1963), 83
212. Edward George, Mill Boy to Minister, 11.
213. See Clarion, 26.3.92.
214. A. M. Thompson, Here I Lie, the Memorial of an Old
Journalist (1937), 98.
215. Pendlebury Pioneer, May 1900.
216. *ibid.*, 27.11.98
217. Blackburn Labour Journal, Feb., 1900
218. 23.4.89.

219. Cf. P. R. Thompson, Socialists, Liberals and Labour, 31-38.
220. John Trevor, My Quest for God, (1897)
221. C. H. Herford, Philip Henry Wicksteed, His Life and Work (1931), 218.
222. My Quest, 233
223. *ibid.*, 241.
224. Herford, *op.cit.*, 220.
225. Stated in the Labour Prophet, Feb. 1892.
 1. That the Labour Movement is a Religious Movement
 2. That the Religion of the Labour Movement is not a Class Religion, but unites members of all classes into working for the Abolition of all Commercial Slavery.
 3. That the Religion of the Labour Movement is not Sectarian or Dogmatic, but free Religion, leaving each man free to develop his own relations with the Power that brought him into being.
 4. That the Emancipation of Labour can only be realised so far as men learn both the Economic and Moral Laws of God and heartily endeavour to obey them.
 5. That the development of Personal Character and the improvement of Social Conditions are both essential to Man's emancipation from moral and social bondage.
226. My Quest, 241, See Also Labour Annual, 1896. 41.
227. Trevor, An Independent Labour Party (Labour Church Tract 2, 1892.)
228. A parallel with Robespierre's cult of the Supreme Being
229. Labour Prophet, Oct., 1893.
230. Baptism sometimes became "the welcoming and naming of a child." e.g. "Neighbours, friends and fellow citizens, we assemble here today in order to give loving and respectful greeting to the most beautiful symbol of humanity's progress and future - a little child." (D. F. Summers, "The Labour Church and Allied Movements in the late 19th century and early 20th Centuries", unpublished Ph.D. thesis Edinburgh University, 1958, 197.)

231. Labour Prophet, Aug., 1893
232. Labour Annual, 1899, 80
233. I.L.P. National Administrative Council, Minute Book, 28.5.94.
234. H. C. Rowe, Labour Prophet, Jan., 1896.
235. see biography in Labour Annual, 1895
236. Pioneer, Jan., 1895
237. *ibid.*, Feb., 1895.
238. *ibid.*, June, 1895.
239. pp. 42-7
240. See Trevor's letter in Workman's Times, 18.11.93
241. *ibid.*, 4.2.93.
242. *ibid.*, 18.11.93.
243. e.g. the churches at Bolton, Farnworth, Bradshaw and Morley cited by D. F. Summers, "The Labour Church and Allied Movements.....", 125.
244. Meeting halls could not always be hired for political purposes on Sundays.
245. quoted in K. S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Class in Victorian England, 456-7. Dan Irving of the S.D.F., for instance, clearly regarded the Labour Church as a political forum: "it provides a free platform whereon all sections of the Socialist party may meet upon neutral ground to discuss and consider the truths of Socialism from every standpoint..... and promote the ultimate union of all socialist forces." (Labour Prophet, Nov., 1897)
246. D. F. Summers, 312-3
247. Primitive Rebels, (1959), 162.

Chapter 10

1. See pp. 343-5.
2. The original branch had collapsed in 1887 and a new one was established in 1893, co-operating in the Liverpool L.R.C. of 1895.
(Liverpool Labour Chronicle, Oct., 1895)
3. See p. 376
4. Justice, 4.1.96.
5. *ibid.*, 21.11.96.
6. *ibid.*, 28.11.96.
7. In 1896 there were S.D.F. candidates at Bacup, Blackburn, Burnley, Colne and Salford. None was successful. (Justice, 13.10.96)
In 1897 an S.D.F. candidate was returned at Manchester.
8. 87 branches were reported in Lancashire and Cheshire in 1896; by 1897 the figure for Lancashire was 60 and an approximate membership of 2,600. In 1900 the I.L.P. claimed to have some kind of organisation in 25 parliamentary divisions, besides its branches in Manchester, Salford and Liverpool.
(See I.L.P., Conference Reports, 1896, 1900; I.L.P., Directory and Branch Returns, 1897.)
9. I.L.P. News, Nov., 1897.
10. See I.L.P., Conference Report, 1900.
11. I.L.P. News, Apr., 1897.
12. *ibid.*, July 1898.
13. *ibid.*, May-July 1899.
14. Report of J. B. Glasier on the condition of Barrow I.L.P. See I.L.P. National Administrative Council Minute Book, 26.11.98.

15. "I don't think I dislike Hardie. But I do seriously believe that he is a great hindrance to the spread of socialism" (Letter to J. B. Glasier, n.d. - probably about 1901 - and others in Robert Blatchford correspondence, Manchester Central Library).
16. H.M. Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party (1965 ed.), 174.
17. I.L.P., Conference Report, 1896.
18. N.A.C. Report, Minute Book, 8.1.98.
19. See, e.g. speeches of Fred Brocklehurst and R.M. Pankhurst at the 1898 Annual Conference, Report, 1898.
20. Pelling, op. cit., 177 n.1. I.L.P., Conference Report 1899
21. I.L.P., Conference Report, 1899.
22. N.A.C., Reports in Minute Book, 16.6.98, 25.6, - 16.7.98, and frequent reports of Aug. - Sept., Novem. and Dec. 1898.
23. I.L.P. Conference Report, 1899.
24. N.A.C., Minute Book. 22.4.96., 3.7.96., 1.10.96.
25. Justice., 13.10.96.
26. Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Annual Report, 1895, and 1897.
27. *ibid.*, 1897.
28. See Edward George, Mill Boy to Minister, 39.
29. See pp 278-9.
30. N.A.C. Minute Book, 1.10.98., 12.12.98. I.L.P. News, Jan 1899.
31. The S.D.F. branch which, it will be recalled, had been established in 1884, had failed to make any real progress over the years.
32. Blackburn Trades Council, Annual Report, 1897.

33. The proposed bye-election did not take place in 1897 and was in fact postponed indefinitely. The arrangements made by the Blackburn socialists to support Burgess nonetheless revealed support from leading radical M.Ps and trade union leaders, even to the extent of arousing the suspicions of the N.A.C. (See N.A.C. Minute Book, 26.2.97.)
34. Blackburn Labour Journal, Feb., 1898.
35. *ibid.*, Dec., 1899.
36. *ibid.*, Feb. - Apr., 1898.
37. *ibid.*, Jan., 1898.
38. *ibid.*, July, 1898.
39. Blackburn Trades Council, Annual Report, 1898.
40. Blackburn Labour Journal, Oct., 1899.
41. *ibid.*, Nov., 1899.
42. There was not always harmony between the socialists and the Trades Council; e.g. Blackburn Labour Journal, March, 1900.
43. *ibid.*, Aug., 1900.
44. I.L.P. News, Aug., 1900.
45. Blackburn Labour Journal, Aug., 1900. See also Colin Cross, Philip Snowden (1966), 50. Cross and Snowden's own An Autobiography (vol. 1, 1934) give accounts of Blackburn politics and the 1900 election, though Cross's account should be treated with a certain caution.
46. Blackburn Times, 29.9.1900.
47. *ibid.*
48. I.L.P. News, Oct., 1900.
49. Blackburn Labour Journal, Oct., 1900.
50. Result: Hornby, Con: 11247. Coddington, Con: 9415. Snowden, Soc: 7096.
51. Blackburn Labour Journal, Dec., 1899.

52. Rochdale Labour News, July, 1897.
53. *ibid.*, Nov., 1896.
54. *ibid.*, Dec., 1897.
55. Hacking, a social democrat, had been a member of the Trades Council for 5 years when he was elected Labour councillor for Wardleworth West in 1898. (Rochdale Labour News, Nov. 1898 and Jan., 1899) He later became secretary of the Trades Council.
56. *ibid.*, July 1897.
57. *ibid.*, Dec., 1897.
58. See *ibid.*, Nov , 1896, Dec., 1897, May 1898, Jan., Mar., 1899.
59. See Labour Leader , 15.9, 27.10. 1900.
60. Hemsall had been a Manchester socialist before going to Accrington to fight his campaign, which Snowden refused to support, claiming that it was ill-considered and opportunist. Nor did the national I.L.P. give him any help. (Labour Leader, 22.9.1900, Accrington Observer, 22.9.1900.)
61. Pioneer, May, 1899.
62. *ibid.*, Aug. Dec., 1899.
63. *ibid.*, Nov., 1899.
64. *ibid.*, Mar., Apr., 1899.
65. *ibid.*, Apr., 1900.
66. Fuel was added to the flames of the campaign of 1901 when one of the Labour councillors - W. H. Chapman - died at the age of 30 from typhoid fever. (Pioneer, Nov., 1901).
67. Manchester, Dec., 1900.
68. Full reports of the cases given in the Labour Leader, 18.7.96.
69. *ibid.*, 30.1.97.
70. Manchester Guardian, 16.11.97.

71. Three major areas of public policy were now concentrated upon - administration, taxation and public services. More decentralisation in local government was demanded, direct taxation called for and public control over milk supplies, telephones and public houses suggested. (Manchester, May, Aug., 1899; Apr. 1901)
72. Manchester Liberal Union, Minutes of General Meeting, 17.6.98., 6.10.98.
73. Manchester, July, Oct., 1899.
74. *ibid.*, Sept., Dec., 1899; Jan., 1900.
75. Only 5 Progressives were elected in Manchester, 4 in Salford. (Manchester Guardian, 20.11.1900).
76. Manchester, Dec., 1900.
77. *ibid.*
78. *ibid.*
79. Manchester Liberal Union, Committee Minutes, 21.7.92. It might be added that the Liberal party had achieved little by these means.
80. Manchester, Aug., 1900.
81. At Ashton, James Johnstone of the Manchester I.L.P. was the candidate. He had taken over from a local I.L.P. man, R. A. Barratt, who had retired at the last moment through illness. The Liberals entered the contest late, nominating a candidate only a week before the polls, thus ruining Johnstone's chances. He received only 737 votes. (Labour Leader, 3.11.1900).
82. Labour Leader, 29.9., 20.10.1900.
83. *ibid.*; for the quarrel over Brocklehurst's attitude, see 10, 24.3.1900 and 7, 14.4.1900. Brocklehurst later left the I.L.P. and became a Conservative City Councillor.
84. Manchester, Feb, 1901. Lack of money was the main complaint after the defeat. The campaign cost £256, of which £100 were donated by the N.A.C.
85. I.L.P. News, Sept., 1900. Labour Leader, 27.10.1900.

86. L.R.C. Minute Book, 21.9.1900. Ward polled 5241 against the Conservative's 5761.
87. L.R.C., Conference Report, 1900, 12.
88. Justice, 3.8.01.
89. H.W. Lee and E. Archbold, Social Democracy in Britain, 159.
90. In 1901 the S.D.F. had 7 municipal candidates; they stood at Nelson, Rochdale, Burnley, Blackburn and Clitheroe; all were defeated.
91. Justice, 10.8.01.
92. No Lancashire branch had joined the Socialist Party of Great Britain by 1905. Almost all the secessionist group's supporters were from London. (See Socialist Standard, 2.12.05).
93. Justice, 10.8.01.
94. *ibid.*
95. e.g. Dec., 1902.
96. Northern Daily Telegraph, 3.11.03.
97. *ibid.*, 29.3.04.
98. There were only 2 Labour (L.R.C.) councillors at the end of 1905 (Burnley Gazette, 21.10.05.)
99. Cotton Factory Times, 18.7.02.
100. *ibid.*, 25.7.02.
101. Justice, 5.4.02.
102. *ibid.*, 12.7.02.
103. See The Social Democrat, III, 1899.
104. e.g. , L.R.C., Conference Report, 1903, 24; 1905, 42, 52.
105. Justice, 26.9.03.

106. *ibid.*, 6.1.06. On contemporary issues it opposed both free trade and protection, though it supported Home Rule. It also urged three immediate reforms: "STATE MAINTENANCE OF CHILDREN, ORGANISATION OF THE LABOUR OF THE UNEMPLOYED PENSIONS FOR THE AGED AND INCAPACITATED INSTEAD OF WORKHOUSE PAUPERISATION, WHICH PROCEEDS UPON THE ASSUMPTION THAT POVERTY IS A CRIME."
107. Justice, 21.1.05.
108. See C. Tsuzuki, Hyndman and British Socialism, 148.
109. *ibid.*, 149-51. F. Bealey and H.M. Pelling, Labour and Politics, 1900-1906, 167.
110. P. R. Thompson, Socialists, Liberal and Labour, 195.
111. Irving was in charge of Hyndman's election campaign, fought many local municipal contests himself and was also secretary of the Burnley S.D.F.
112. Justice, 22.2.02.
113. *ibid.*, 31.5.02.
114. *ibid.*
115. On I.L.P. techniques in other regions, see Pelling, Origins of the Labour Party, 179 and Bealey and Pelling, Labour and Politics, 169.
116. H. W. Lee and E. Archbold, Social Democracy in Britain, 170.
117. Justice, 5.4.02.
118. *ibid.*, 18.2.05.
119. See, e.g., letter of J. H. Thornton (Burnley) and John Moore (Rochdale) in Justice, 4, 11.3.05.
120. *ibid.*, 29.4.05. Hyndman's line had wavered. In 1904 he had agreed with Irving (Tsuzuki, 155) but by the following year wheeled round against the man who was to conduct his election campaign in 1906.
121. His article in The Social Democrat, 15.8.05.
122. See pp. 400 - 02.
123. 15.2.06.
124. I.L.P., Conference Report, 1900.

125. *ibid.*, 1905, 69-78.
126. I.L.P., Conference Report, 1900, 21.
127. L.R.C., Minute Book, 5.12.1900. (See also Leslie Bather, "Manchester and Salford Trades Council from 1880", Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, vi, 1963). In 1900 the Trades Council had formed a United Workers' Municipal Election Committee of which Tom Gunning of the I.L.P. was secretary; it was a forerunner of the later L.R.C. (Manchester, Oct., 1900).
128. See p. 392
129. Justice, 8.8.03.
130. In addition, one of the parliamentary candidates nominated was an I.L.P. man.
131. Cotton Factory Times, 6.11.03.
132. Justice, 8.8.03. Apparently the two S.D.F. branches remained outside the L.R.C. until 1906 when South Salford affiliated with 90 members. In 1907, H. F. Boardman, a social democrat, sat on the Labour Party executive committee but after 1909 the S.D.F. influence seems to have disappeared altogether with the formation of the British Socialist Party. (Manchester and Salford L.R.C., Annual Report, 1906, 1907.)
133. Manchester L.R.C., Annual Report, 1906. Also M.S.T.C., Annual Report, 1905.
134. The L.R.C. was not in itself affiliated to the national L.R.C.
135. Manchester L.R.C., Annual Report, 1906.
136. E.g. Nelson Weavers, Minute Book, 12.7.97., 10.7.98.
137. *ibid.*, 30.8.99. Report of Special Members' Meeting.
138. Two delegates, H. Sharpe and R. Hargreaves, were present; with A. B. Newall of Colne they were the only representatives. of weavers' unions. (L.R.C., Conference Report, 1900, 7.)
139. Nelson Weavers', Minute Book, 15.7, 26.8, 23.9.01.
140. Bealey and Pelling, Labour and Politics, 97.

141. This election has been analysed by Frank Bealey, "The Northern Weavers, Independent Labour Representation and Clitheroe, 1902," Manchester School, 1957. Since the present author agrees with this analysis it has not been thought necessary to repeat most of the detailed information contained within it.
142. Nelson, Colne, Brierfield and District Textile Trades Federation, Minute Book, 22.12.01.
143. *ibid.*, 17.1.02. Cotton Factory Times, 24.1., 14.2., 7.3.02.
144. Textile Trades Federation, Minute Book, 31.1.02.
145. Infancy of Labour, vol. 1., Report of Meeting at Colne, 3.7.02.
147. See F. Bealey, Manchester School, 1957. The Liberals had pointed out that "a socialist is not regarded as a Labour man purely, by some Liberals, and whilst they may be willing to forgo any claims they may have for a bona-fide Labour man, they would not feel the same obligation in dealing with a socialist."
148. Cotton Factory Times, 11.7.02.
149. *ibid.*
150. *ibid* and 18.7., 1.8.02.
151. *ibid.*, 18.7.02.
152. Nelson Weavers, Minute Book, 22.9.02.
153. Clitheroe Division L.R.A.; rules set out in circular of National L.R.C., March 1902. (Infancy of Labour, vol. 1.)
154. Nelson Chronicle, 7.11.02.
155. Burnley Gazette, 4.11.03.
156. Rules of the Nelson and District Weavers' Association, (1904).
157. Colne and Nelson Times, 3.11.05. (Also Nelson Chronicle), 6.11.03.) At Colne the Tories and the Free Church Council had realised the Labour danger quickly and were not so ready to stand down for Labour candidates as the Nelson Liberals were. An additional factor which impeded the Labour Party at Colne was the strange case of A. B. Newall, the respected Labour councillor, who

quite suddenly in 1903 fled to Canada taking, it appears, about £100 from the Colne Weavers' funds. (Nelson Chronicle, 2.10.03.) His family was left in doubts as to his whereabouts for some week, but appear later to have joined him.

158. Nelson Workers' Guide, 11.12.03.

159. Nelson Chronicle, 18.9.03.

160. Colne and Nelson Times, 6.10.05.

161. Nelson Chronicle, 9.10.03.

Chapter 11

1. They were: the Beamers and Twisters, Spinners Amalgamation, Lancashire Miners, Bookbinders and Machine Rulers, Accrington Cardroom Operatives, Dock Labourers, Labour Amalgamation, Lithograph Printers, Musicians, Oldham Spinners, Colne and Nelson Weavers. (L.R.C., Conference Report, 1900):
2. *ibid.*, 15.
3. L.R.C., Conference Report, 1901, 8.
4. U.T.F.W.A., Report of Legislative Council, 1895-96
5. *ibid.* and Report of Conference, 1896.
6. See Cotton Factory Times, 19.6., 17.7., 24.7.96. A note of an interview between Beatrice Webb and W. H. Wilkinson, the Weavers' secretary, in the Webb Trade Union Collection reveals that the Weavers believed Mawdsley's intransigence lay behind the Spinners' opposition. (Webb Trade Union Collection, A, XXXVII, (1), 97.)
7. "Driving" was the over-working of weavers in order to obtain increased output. In some cases women weavers were driven to suicide by the pressure of overzealous overlookers. (See Weavers Minute Book, 17.11.1900; Cotton Factory Times, 21.6.01).
8. 60 & 61 Vict. c.58.
9. Cotton Factory Times, 19.5.99.
10. I Edw. 7, c.22. The 55½ hours week came into operation with the stoppage of mills at noon on Saturdays. The Weavers also gained a clause guaranteeing more explicit particulars for piecework.
11. Cotton Factory Times, 22.9.99., 14.12.1900.
12. *ibid.*, 10.2, 24.3, 5.5.99; 30.3, 27 4.1900.
13. *ibid.*, 12.7.01
14. Spinners' Amalgamation, Annual Report, 1900.
15. L.C.M.F., 4.5.01
16. This issue provided an example of recurring employer hatred; e.g., "Forty years ago employers might have had some regard for old and aged servants, but the companies of today had no regard to long services, except that which makes profits....." (Enoch Edwards, M.F.G.B. President, speaking to the annual conference in 1904).

17. See L.C.M.F., 14.1.96. and Thomas Ashton, Three Big Strikes in the Coal Industry, II, 81.
18. Ashton, op.cit., II, 99.
19. L.R.C., Minute Book, 10.5.1900.
20. L.C.M.F., 28.4.1900.
21. ibid., 26.5.1900.
22. e.g., ibid., 15.9.1900
23. TUC., Annual Report, 1899.65.
24. ibid.
25. 12.1.1900.
26. 9.8.01.
27. See Clegg, Fox and Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889, vol. 1, pp 305-325. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants had been served with an injunction during a strike on the lines of the Taff Vale Railway Co. in 1900. The Society appealed but the original judgement was upheld by the House of Lords thus making it possible for the Taff Vale Railway Co. to proceed with actions for damages against the union officials. The Railway Servants lost the case and were obliged to pay out £42,000 in 1903 to cover damages and costs. The resulting threat to strike action was immense and led to demands throughout the trade union world for a statute to reverse the Taff Vale judgement and keep union funds inviolable. (See also Weavers' Amalgamation, Minute Book, 17.11.1900.)
28. Cotton Factory Times, 1.1., 30.8.01.
29. The Times, 4.3.02.
30. 7.2., 26.12.02.
31. Weavers' Amalgamation, Annual Report, 1902.
32. Cotton Factory Times, 24.1.02.
33. J. R. MacDonald's phrase: See L.R.C. Quarterly Circular of Sept. 1902 (Infancy of Labour, vol. 1.)

34. Cotton Factory Times, 18.7.02.
35. ibid., 11.7.02.
36. ibid., 8.8.02.
37. See ibid., 7.2.02. His colleague, Thomas Ashton of the Spinners, said of Mawdsley: "He was above all things a business man, with no sentiment, little inclination to theorise and no windy talk ... a lot of silly trash, he said, wanted knocking out of the heads of some trades union leaders and as long as he had the opportunity he was determined to do it."
38. Cardroom Amalgamation, Annual Report, 1902.
39. The ballot was conducted by the three major amalgamations and the much smaller unions of Beamers and Twisters, Overlookers and the Bleachers. All six groups returned majorities on both questions. (U.T.F.W.A., Statement of the Ballot on the Question of Director Representation in Parliament, Nov. 1902. Trades Union Congress Library.)
- | | <u>FOR L.R.</u> | <u>AGAINST</u> | <u>FOR LEVY</u> | <u>AGAINST</u> | <u>NEUT</u> | <u>NO VOTE</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Card Room | 14173 | 9573 | 14098 | 4342 | 942 | 4402 |
| Spinners | 9978 | 3057 | 9634 | 3407 | 242 | 551 |
| Beamers | 2509 | 377 | 2487 | 402 | 1046 | - |
| Weavers | 54637 | 11352 | 53568 | 11701 | 4266 | 8299 |
| Overlookers | 1210 | 170 | 1195 | 170 | 21 | 35 |
| Bleachers | 1647 | 327 | 1565 | 331 | - | - |
40. 4.4.02.
41. 6.2.03.
42. M.F.G.B., Conference Report, 1900.

43. M.F.G.B., Report of Executive Committee Meeting, 6.12.01.
The scheme was most comprehensive, but gave the M.F.G.B. a good deal of control over candidates. Affiliated unions were to pay 1/- a year for every member, by which unions with less than 10,000 members would be allowed one candidate; unions with more members than this were permitted an additional candidate for each 10,000 members. (This would have given Lancashire three candidates). A parliamentary salary of £350 a year was available for each successful candidate, as were funds for returning officers' expenses and legal costs.
44. L.C.M.F., 28.12.01.
45. Speech to M.F.G.B. Conference, 1903. The L.C.M.F. had paid Woods a salary of £200 a year from 1897 to 1900.
46. L.C.M.F., Conference Report, 1902.
47. L.C.M.F., 8.11.02.
48. *ibid.*, 27.4.01.
49. *ibid.*, 13.9.02.
50. *ibid.*, 3.1.03.
51. *ibid.*, 23.5.03.
52. *ibid.*
53. *ibid.*, 25.4.03.
54. *ibid.*, 20.8.04., 24.2.06. When Glover and Walsh eventually entered parliament in 1906, they were paid a yearly salary of £350 out of the M.F.G.B. fund. The L.R.C. also paid £200 for each of them to the L.C.M.F., which decided to pay Glover and Walsh £100 each out of this instead of continuing to pay them an agent's salary.
55. By 1905 there were 59 Lancashire trade unions (including the local cotton societies) and 20 trades councils affiliated to the L.R.C. Besides these, there were 14 local labour representation committees. (L.R.C., Conference Report, 1905, 75.)

56. Cotton Factory Times, 6.2.03.
57. Oldham Trades Council, Annual Report, 1898.
58. Edward George, From Mill Boy to Minister, 50.
59. The Trades Council acted as the Oldham L.R.C., affiliating to the national L.R.C. during 1903.
60. Cotton Factory Times, 23.10.03.
61. ibid., 1.5.03.
62. ibid., 3.4.03.
63. ibid., 20.10.05.
64. ibid., 3.11.05. The Cardroom Amalgamation offered Crinion every means of support (Minute Book, 19.10.05.) but his own society at Oldham backed his refusal to stand.
65. The U.T.F.W.A. refused to submit another candidate and closed its account book for the Oldham election, switching its energies to Shackleton's campaign at Clitheroe. (Cotton Factory Times, 10.11.05.) The Oldham Carpenters and Joiners, with the support of the Twisters and Beamers and the I.L.P., tried to secure the nomination of their national agent George Dew but the Executive of the A.S.C.J. refused to sanction the plan. (Cotton Factory Times, 17.11., 15.12.05.). An interesting postscript occurred in January 1906 when the Oldham Spinners and Cardroom Operatives held a ballot on whether to pay levies to the Trades Council for local Labour candidates; only one tenth of the membership voted. (Cotton Factory Times, 2.2., 23.2.06.)
66. Bolton United Trades Council, Annual Report, 1896.
67. Bolton Chronicle, 18.10.02.
68. ibid., 30.8.02. In 1902 the Bolton L.R.C. even refused to have the socialist speakers, Keir Hardie and James Sexton, appear at their conference, preferring instead the Lib-Lab. W.J. Davis. (L.R.C. Minute Book, 1.9.02.)
69. Who Was Who, 1916 - 1928
70. Bolton Chronicle, 25.10.02.
71. for biographical details see Cotton Factory Times, 15.5.03.
72. Cotton Factory Times, 3.11.05.

73. St. Helens Newspaper, 10.7.03. Cuttings Book, (St. Helens Public Library), vol. 1900-05, 148.
74. St. Helens Newspaper, 5.1.06.
75. Herbert Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss , 46106, cxxii.
76. Ince Divisional Labour Registration Association, Minute Book, 1903
77. R. G. Gregory, The Miners and Politics in England and Wales, 1906-14. (Unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1963), 528.
78. Northern Daily Telegraph, 16.10.03.
79. *ibid.*, 29.9., 16.10.03.
80. L.R.C., Minute Book, 5.9.03.
81. Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss., 46484, cxlv.
82. See Frank Bealey, "Negotiations between the Liberal Party and the Labour Representation Committee Before the General Election of 1906," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 1956.
83. Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss , 46106, cxxii.
84. *ibid.*,
85. Northern Daily Telegraph, 9.10.03
86. L.R.C., Minute Book, 30.10.03.
87. Gladstone Papers, 46485, cxlvi.
88. See pp. 373 - 5
89. L.R.C. Minute Book, 27.9.04.
90. L.C.M.F., 5.11.04.
91. *ibid.*
92. L.R.C. Minute Book, 2.12.04.
93. See pp. 367 - 9.
94. L.C.M.F., 3.12.04.
95. *ibid.*
96. *ibid.*, 31.12.04.

97. ibid.
98. ibid.
99. L.R.C. Minute Book, 4.10.05.
100. Justice, 11.11 05.
- 101 Accrington Observer, 25.2., 11.2., 25.3., 25.7.05
102. L.C.M.F., 7.11.03.
103. Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss., 46106, cxxii.
104. "I would like to hear from you as to whether you propose to put a candidate in Mr. Woods' place and if you would be good enough to give me information for my Committee upon the prospects in Newton-le-Willows, supposing an outside man was brought down, I should be much obliged."
 (L.C.M.F., 5.12.03.)
105. ibid., 23.4.04.
106. ibid., May, 1904.
107. L.R.C., Minute Book, 30.6.04.
108. L.C.M.F., 16.7.04.
109. ibid., 3.12.04.
110. ibid., 22.4.05.
111. ibid., 30.12.05.
112. For additional biographical details: Cuttings Book, (St. Helens Public Library), vol. 1900-05, 92, 114.
113. L.R.C. Minute Book, 4.10.05 and pamphlet issued by Seddon's committee: Newton Parliamentary Division: J. A. Seddon's Candidature (1905), contained in Infancy of Labour, vol. 1.
114. L.C.M.F., 24.2.06.
115. Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss., 46485, cxlvi.
116. Wigan Observer, 5, 19.1.06.
117. See L.R.C. Minute Book, 7.4.03. (Circular from J. R. MacDonald).

118. Stockport County Borough Express, 26.3.03. Cotton Factory Times, 3.4.03.
119. Cotton Factory Times, 8.5.03.
120. Clarion, 26.1.06.
121. See Jack Mowat and Albert Power, Our Struggle for Socialism!!! A Short History of the Barrow-in-Furness Labour Party, (1949)
122. Cotton Factory Times, 8.5.03. Barrow News, 2.5.03.
123. Barrow News, 15.8., 29.8.03. The national L.R.C. agreed subject to Duncan's signing the Constitution, (Minute Book, 30.10.03.)
124. Barrow News, 22.10.04.
125. *ibid.*, 2.4.04.
126. *ibid.*, 5.11.04.
127. L.R.C. Minute Book, 18.6.03.
128. Account from Bolton Chronicle, 6.5., 20.5., 27.5.05.
129. See e.g., Preston Herald, 17.7.95.
130. *ibid.*, 1.4.03.
131. *ibid.*, 6.5.03.
132. Cotton Factory Times, 8.5.03.
133. John Hodge, Workman's Cottage to Windsor Castle (1931), 138-141
134. *ibid.*, 146.
135. Preston Herald, 13.5.03.
136. Hodge claimed that Kerr was "no speaker and a duffer at question time". (*op.cit.*, 146) The landowning Stanley family often laid claims to the nomination for this seat, but no representative was available in 1903. (See Preston Herald, 9.5.03.)
137. *ibid.*, 13.5.03.
138. L.R.C. Minute Book, 12.5.03.
139. Preston Herald, 9.5.03.
140. *ibid.*, 13.5.03.

141. Conservative - 8639; Labour - 6490.
142. L.R.C., Conference Report, 1904., 19.
143. L.R.C., Minute Book, 24.1.05.
144. Liverpool Trades Council, Minute Book, 26 9.94. Annual Report, 1895-6. See also Sydney Maddock, The Liverpool Trades Council and Politics, 112-131.
145. Labour Chronicle, Nov. - Dec., 1895.
146. Trades Council, Minute Book, 28.10.96.
147. The Dockers had withdrawn from the Trades Council over the new T.U.C. Standing Orders of 1895. (Annual Report, 1894-5.)
148. Trades Council Minutes Book, 14.9.98. Resolution implemented 11th May, 1899.
149. Trades Council, Annual Report, 1899-1900.
150. S. Maddock, op.cit., 138.
151. Trades Council, Annual Report, 1902.-03
152. L.R.C., Minute Book, 7.5.03. Earlier in the year the L.R.C. had resolved to treat the question of a Labour candidate in Liverpool as "a matter of urgency", (ibid., 9.1.03.)
153. These meetings are recorded in the Liverpool L.R.C. Minute Book, volume 1903-05: 6.6.03., 10.10.03.
154. ibid., 10.10.03. Supported by the national L.R.C. (L.R.C. Minute Book, 30.10.03).
155. Liverpool L.R.C. Minute Book, 3.11.03.
156. ibid., 10.10.03.
157. e.g. ibid., 22.10.04.
158. ibid., 18.10.04.
159. Liverpool L.R.C. Minute Book, 6.9.05.
160. ibid., 5.12.05.
161. See Rochdale Citizen, Nov., 1905; Jan., 1906.
162. Burnley Gazette, 12.9.03.

163. e.g., *ibid.*, 2.9.03.
164. *ibid.*, 22.10.02.
165. *ibid.*, 5.11.02.
166. See p. 323.
167. Burnley Textile Trades Federation, Minute Book; Report of Sub-Committees, 6.2.05., 21.2.05.
168. *ibid.*, 27.2.05.
169. Burnley Weavers, Minute Book, 6.6.05.
170. Burnley Gazette, 21.10.05.
171. *ibid.*
172. Cotton Factory Times, 9.2.06.
173. *ibid.*
174. *ibid.*, 16.2.06. A motion to withdraw because of the religious education question was lost by 5662 to 5788.
175. Walter Bennett, History of Burnley (1951), IV, 146.

Chapter 12

1. A situation similar to that in which the Labour party found itself after the 1959 General Election.
2. The Bury bye-election of 1902 had already shown that the protectionist Bread Tax was highly unpopular among working class people. (See ch. 5 p. 145). It seemed likely that the Government was therefore already embarked upon a mild protectionist policy even before Chamberlain's proposals were made public.
3. It did not help when some candidates alleged that the South African mineowners were Jewish, for this introduced a note of anti-semitism into the campaign; e.g. speech of J. A. Seddon, Newton-le-Willows, (St. Helens Newspaper, 5.1.06).
4. E.g., Burnley Gazette, 4.11.03.
5. Herbert Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss., 46105, cxxi.
6. The phrase is Gladstone's, used in his memorandum of 13.3.03. (See *ibid.*, 46106, cxxii.)
7. Frank Bealey, "Negotiations between the Liberal Party and the Labour Representation Committee Before the General Election of 1906," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 1956.
8. Herbert Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss., 46105, cxxi.
9. *ibid.*, 46481, cxlii.
10. *ibid.*, 46483, cxliv.
11. *ibid.*, 46484, cxlv.
12. *ibid.*, 46485, cxlvi.
13. *ibid.*, 46483, cxliv.
14. *ibid.*, 46484, cxlv. (July 1902; recorded in an interview with C. E. Schwann, Liberal M.P. for North Manchester, in which Gladstone "pitched into him about Manchester". Clearly Gladstone touched on some form of "plan of campaign" for Manchester, though he does not mention what and certainly makes no reference to the drastic reorganisation that was to come in 1903 with the creation of the Manchester Liberal Federation. Moreover, by 1902 Gladstone was favouring a rapprochement with the Manchester L.R.C.

15. Katherine Chorley, Manchester Made Them, (1950), 137-8.
Noting this movement the author comments: it "spoiled the character of Manchester because it left her without her natural leaders."
16. Manchester Liberal Union, Minute Book of the General Committee, 11.2.01., 17.5.01.
17. Manchester Liberal Federation, Constitution and Rules, 1903; Minute Book of the Executive Committee, 18.9.03; Manchester Guardian, 15.7.03.
18. M.L.F., Balance Book, 1903-1938.
19. See p.317.
20. L.R.C., Conference Report, 1903, 33-35.
21. *ibid.*, 1904, 22, 40.
22. F. Bealey and H. M. Pelling, Labour and Politics 1900-1906, 267.
23. Gladstone Papers, B.M.Add. Mss., 46484, cxlv; 46485, cxlvi.
24. *ibid.*, 46484.
25. P. P. Poirier, The Advent of the Labour Party, (1958), 253.
26. Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss., 46105, cxxi.
27. *ibid.*, 46484, cxlv.
28. L.R.C. Minute Book, 5.9.03.
29. Gladstone Papers, B.M. Add. Mss., 46106, cxxii.
30. *ibid.*, 46484, cxlv.
31. *ibid.*, 46106, cxxii.
32. Cotton Factory Times, 6.11.03.
33. J. R. Clynes, Memoirs (1937), I, 105.
34. Gladstone Papers, B. M. Add., Mss., 46106, cxxii.

35. P. P. Poirier, Advent of the Labour Party, 251.
36. Gladstone Papers, B. M. Add. Mss., 46107, cxxiii.
37. His name was listed in the L.R.C. schedule of candidates; L.R.C. Conference Report, 1905, 24-5.
38. Pioneer, Feb. 1904.
39. Results of contests in which Labour candidates appeared are given in the Appendix at end of Chapter Xii.
40. William Marsland, Spinners' Amalgamation, Annual Report, 1905.
41. William Mullin, Cardroom Amalgamation, Minute Book, 24.6.05.
42. Account from Bolton Chronicle, 6,3,20.1.06.
43. Philip Snowden, An Autobiography, (1934), I, 101.
44. The Blackburn branch of the Irish League decided to support both Snowden and the Liberal, since Blackburn returned 2 M.P.'s. Where a Labour and a Liberal candidate stood in a single member division it was usual for the Irish voters to support the Liberal.
45. Account from Northern Daily Telegraph, 3, 10, 15, 17, 1.06. Clarion 2.2.06.
46. Shackleton's election agent was Tom Shaw of Colne, later Labour M.P. for Preston and Minister of Labour (1924) and War (1929-31)
47. Colne and Nelson Times, 12, 19, 26.1.06. Accrington Observer, 27.1.06.
48. Account from Preston Guardian, 6, 20.1.06. Liverpool Daily Post, 2.1.06.
49. Account from Burnley Gazette, 6, 10, 13, 17.1.06. Northern Daily Telegraph, 4, 6, 15.1.06. Justice, 13.1.06. (In the 1906 Municipal elections the S.D.F. fought every ward in the town for the first time: see Burnley Gazette, 3.11.06.)
50. Accrington Observer, 6, 9, 13, 20, 23.1.06.
51. Rochdale Citizen, July 1905 - January 1906.

52. The Secretary of the Glass Bottle Makers Society denied that Protection would help the trade, which in any case was improving by 1906. (St. Helens Newspaper, 11.12.03)
53. St. Helens Newspaper, 5, 9, 12.1.06. Newspaper Cuttings Book, (St. Helens Public Library) vol. 1900-05, 148, 192, 276; vol. 1905-1910, 24, 26, 37, 84.
54. Wigan Observer, 10, 20.1.06.
55. Bolton Chronicle, 13, 20.1.06.
56. St. Helens Newspaper, 5, 12, 26.1.06. Newspaper Cuttings Book, (St. Helens Public Library), vol. 1905-10, 79.
57. Wigan Observer, 3, 5, 6, 19.1.06.
58. 26.1.06.
59. Account of the campaigns from Manchester Guardian, 1-12.1.06. Clynes later denied that he had enlisted Liberal support, (Clarion, 26.1.06.) but it seems clear that members of the local Liberal Association had helped in his campaign. (See Manchester Guardian, 11, 12.1.06).
60. Manchester Guardian, 5, 16, 23.1.06. Clarion, 9.2.06.
61. Stockport County Borough Express, 18.1.06.
62. Manchester Guardian, 16.1.06. Clarion, 9.2.06. The Pioneer, Jan. 1906.
63. Barrow News, 6, 20.1.06.
64. Liverpool Daily Post, 4, 9, 11, 15.1.06.
65. H.M. Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 415.
66. Details of the elections from Manchester Guardian, 1-4.11.1919.
67. *ibid.*, 3.11.1919.
68. See Economics Research Section, Manchester University, Readjustment in Lancashire (1936), 9-65. Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association, The Development of Lancashire and Merseyside - Past, Present and Future (1963), *passim*.
69. Readjustment in Lancashire, 24, 29, 64, 65. P. E. Lloyd, "Industrial Change in the Merseyside Development Area, 1949-1959," Town Planning Review, 35, 1959.

70. The author is grateful to Mr. E. Hiron, Labour Party agent at St. Helens, for his suggestions on this point.
71. Arthur Marwick, Clifford Allen: The Open Conspirator, (1964) 96.
72. R. E. Dowse, Left in the Centre, (1966); quoted p.40.
73. *ibid.*, 38-9, 204.
74. L. J. MacFarlane, The British Communist Party; Its Origin and Development until 1929 (1966), 124, 251-2.

CONCLUSION

1. Trevor Wilson, The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914-1935, 1968 ed., 18-19
2. Roy Gregory, The Miners and British Politics 1906-14, 1968, 191
3. P F Clarke, "British Politics and Blackburn Politics 1900-10", Historical Journal, XII, 1969
4. H M Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910, 370-71; T Brennan, E W Cooney and H Pollins, Social Change in South West Wales, 152 ff.; R Gregory, op. cit., 119 ff.
5. R Gregory, 66-7
6. H M Pelling, op. cit., 411-12; R Gregory, 91-3; R K Middlemas, The Clydesiders, 1965, 22
7. see E P Thompson, "Homage to Tom Maguire" in Essays in Labour History, ed. by A Briggs and J Saville
8. Thanks to P R Thompson's, Socialists, Liberals and Labour: the Struggle for London 1885-1914, 1967
9. *ibid.*, 13
10. *ibid.*, 88-9
11. *ibid.*, 95
12. *ibid.*, 2
13. *ibid.*, 39
14. *ibid.*, 54 Table 6, and 59 Table 7: cf. with Tables 5, 9 and 10 *supra*.
15. Thompson, op. cit., 250-262